

Practicing Mindfulness to Enhance Your Creativity

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Mindfulness is an important concept to understand when researching creativity and productivity. Its most basic directive is to be in tune with the present moment. It's a way of engaging with what is happening right now. So many of us spend too much time dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.

Mindfulness helps you clear the clutter of your mind. It resets you in a way nothing else can. Unfortunately, being mindful doesn't just happen naturally for many people—especially in today's society. It's something you need to learn how to do and make an effort to practice regularly.

In practicing mindfulness, you'll become more aware of the world around you. You'll learn more about yourself and about other people. You don't have to meditate and chant to practice mindfulness, though that's what comes to many people's minds when they first hear the term. You'll find that it's a valuable part of what you do to learn more about yourself and enhance your creativity.

Let Your Problems Fade Away

When you allow yourself to be in the present moment, any mistakes you've made and problems from your past fade away. All of your worry and stress for what your future holds fades away too. When you practice mindfulness, the only thing that exists in the world is the present moment.

Your imagination and creativity can soar when you clear your mind of the clutter. It gives you a different perspective and view on life—possibly different from anything you've experienced before.

Many people hold off on being creative and following through with their ideas because they're afraid of the consequences for the future. When you practice mindfulness, your uncertainty fades away—it doesn't matter anymore.

Being in the present moment allows us to examine our creative idea from every angle, thinking about it for what it is rather than what we fear it will be. Mindfulness allows us to make new connections and come up with incredible ideas that wouldn't be possible otherwise.

Even 15 Minutes a Day Helps

I mentioned that you can practice mindfulness even without meditation if it intimidates you. That's true, but I urge you to consider meditation to facilitate the process. Research has shown us that meditating for just 15 minutes a day can change the way our brain works. It shifts the frontal brain activity in a way that can lead to more positive, creative, productive, and insightful thoughts.

Part of the reason this shift occurs is because mindfulness allows us to get rid of the clutter. We all know that trying to do too many things at once leads to disaster—and so does spending too much time thinking about your past and your future.

Everyone is unique and has unique experiences and thoughts. We experience the world around us differently from our neighbor. If we are not mindful of what is around us, it impacts us creatively. Some experts relate it to having a blind spot when driving. If we don't pay attention to input in the present moment, it creates a blind spot so we don't see what we need to form the right connections.

Being in the present moment gives our mind a rest so we see what we need to see. It allows us to make choices in seclusion from past mistakes and fears of the future. Is it really as easy as that? Indeed, it is.

The Importance of the Mind's Resting State

The research of neurologist Marcus Raichle uncovered that our minds are designed to wander—they're constantly in motion until we mindfully stop them. When our minds are at rest, the brain gathers more information from the world and from inside of us.

It waits to capture information that is useful or important. Through mindfulness, our brain reaches this resting state more often because our mind doesn't have to wander in those moments—this is when the magic of creativity happens.

In a typical moment, our mind moves rapidly through thoughts—thoughts about the past and about the future. There are always things to think about and wonder about, new and old. There is always an opportunity to become distracted and avoid paying attention and being in the moment.

Focusing on one thing means you can't focus on something else. Our attention is a limited resource, and many of us are abusing it by avoiding the present. When you practice mindfulness, you allow your brain to reach its resting state, where you can pay attention to the world around you and form new connections you didn't have enough attention to spare for before.

Stop Multitasking

One of the first things you can do to be more present is stop multitasking. You have no doubt seen articles in the news about how ineffective it can be to multitask. It makes you less productive, less happy, and less creative.

Focus on what you're doing in the present moment—give it your whole attention. If you need to, put things in place to force yourself to do this. For instance, there's software you can install on your computer to block out websites you find yourself visiting to waste time.

Get Away From an Overwhelming Situation

When you do find yourself becoming overwhelmed, it's best to get away from the situation. When you feel like everything is pulling you in a different direction, that signals that it's time to take a break. Get away from your desk and take a walk. Go lie down and close your eyes. Do whatever you need to do to remove yourself and put your mind at its resting state.

The Core of Mindfulness

That brings me to how you practice mindfulness in the first place. At its core, all you have to do is reset yourself by paying attention to what is happening in the present moment. Use your senses to absorb the world around you.

For some people, it's as simple as that. Others do better with formal meditation or a complete removal of distractions. Mindfulness is whatever you choose to make it. Practice yoga or meditation, take long walks outside, eliminate all external and internal distractions—do whatever you need to do.

If you still find yourself being overwhelmed, tell yourself that you're going to set everything else aside and become mindful. You're going to turn it off, because nothing else matters in these moments.

The more you practice this, the better you'll become. You'll also get better at dismissing negative thoughts, worries, and anything else that takes you out of the present moment.

Practicing mindfulness will help you become happier, more creative, and more successful. Don't dismiss this is something you'll never try because you feel you're too overwhelmed to make the effort. That's the point of it anyway—everyone is so overwhelmed, busy, and distracted that our creative mind power is dwindling away. Practice mindfulness, and you'll get it back better than ever before.



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