

Here and Now Introductory Letter

Dear Participant:

Life is busy! Our days are packed with technology, responsibilities, and crazy schedules. The boundaries between work and home life are often blurred. Multi-tasking has become a way of life and leaves little opportunity to live in the moment and savor life's pleasures as they happen. With the holidays fast approaching, we wanted to help slow down these fast-paced days by incorporating the *Here And Now* challenge.

Many individuals are turning to mindfulness practices to slow things down and create deeper connections with themselves, others, and nature. Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience.

And the benefits of mindfulness are exciting and numerous. Practicing mindfulness improves physical and mental health. Mindfulness may help:

- Lower stress levels
- Improve sleep
- Reduce chronic pain
- Create greater capacity to deal with difficult events and situations
- Enhance optimism, life satisfaction, and happiness

With all of these benefits in mind, we would like to challenge you to practice and enjoy more mindfulness. *Here And Now* is a unique and inspiring campaign that challenges you to practice mindfulness at least three times a day for four weeks.

Wait. You have no idea how to employ a mindful moment? No worries. Anyone can practice mindfulness anytime and anywhere. It can be as simple as drawing your attention to your breathing and focusing on the inhale and exhale pattern for a minute or so. Along the way, you will discover the benefits of living more mindfully and explore other ways to engage in mindfulness throughout your day.

Here And Now kicks off on Monday, November 25th and all Grande Associates, Spouses, and Domestic Partners are invited to register for this wellness challenge. Use this packet as a guide and keep an eye on your email for weekly mindfulness moments. Track your progress on the attached tracking form and be sure to check-in weekly on www.grandehealth.com → Wellness Resources → Wellness Challenges to reflect on your mindfulness practice. All players who successfully complete *all four* weekly check-ins will qualify for the final raffle. The grand prize drawing will consist of Apple air pods, Grande store gift cards, yoga mats and more!

For more information, please contact Bekah Wegner, Health & Wellness Analyst.

Be well,

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Mindful Eating

Have you ever:

- Eaten beyond the point of fullness?
- Not remembered how a meal tasted that you just ate?
- Eaten when you weren't hungry but might have been bored or stressed?

Mindless eating is pervasive today. We squeeze meals and snacks in between meetings and carpools and give little attention to what we eat, how it tastes, or how much we eat.

Mindful eating prompts individuals to give full attention to the experience of eating and drinking without judgment. According to The Center For Mindful Eating (TCME), mindful eating is:

- Allowing one self to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through food selection and preparation by respecting and trusting your own inner wisdom.
- Tapping into all of the senses in choosing to eat food that is both satisfying to you and nourishing to your body.
- Acknowledging responses to food (likes, dislikes or neutral) without judgment.
- Becoming aware of physical hunger and fullness cues to guide your decisions to begin and end eating.

Mindfulness helps you move away from mindless eating habits and be more aware of the thoughts and feelings that impact how and why you eat. Try these tips to enjoy mindful eating:

Tip 1: Quiet please. Try eating a few minutes in silence and be present in the moment. Be aware of the thoughts and feelings that come and go and focus on the activity of eating.

Tip 2: Unitask. Avoid multitasking when eating. Put down the mobile device, turn off the television, and simply focus on the act of eating.

Tip 3: All Senses Go. Engage all of your senses when eating. Be mindful of how the food tastes, what it feels like in your mouth, and the smells that fill the room.

Tip 4: Mindfully Check In. Aim to eat until you are pleasantly satisfied and neither stuffed nor starving. Trust yourself to be aware of this feeling and act on it.



“**Mindful eating prompts individuals to give full attention to the experience of eating and drinking without judgment.**”

Nothing Happens Next...

Mindfulness is not a goal or destination. Goals are about future events and activities. Mindfulness draws attention only to the present with no regard for the future or the past.

Do not expect a big ah-ha moment when practicing mindfulness. The reality is that nothing happens next. Your focus is on the present and you simply observe thoughts coming and going with no judgment.

Go ahead. Try it right now.

Become aware of yourself reading the words on this paper.

Feel the paper in your hands.

Notice the color of the paper and the ink.

Draw attention to your breath. Notice your chest and abdomen rising with each inhale and feel the warm air escape as you exhale.

If you feel the moment happening as you read this, then you are living in the moment. Nothing happens next. This is it. This is mindfulness. It is not a destination. This is it. You are already there.



The Original Mindfulness Challenge

HERE
and
NOW

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Don't Worry, Be Happy!

While difficult to define, most would agree that happiness produces good feelings and a positive sense of well-being. And most of us crave more of it in our life.

As it turns out not all of us are born with a positive personality. Genetics plays a significant part in determining our personal level of happiness and consequent well-being. Studies conducted with twins repeatedly have found that identical twins report similar levels of happiness throughout life despite being raised apart.

External factors and our environment also contribute to happiness. Poverty, unemployment, health issues, and violence can negatively impact our ability to achieve happiness. However, having your dream job or a six-figure salary does not guarantee happiness either.

Health professionals believe that 40% of our capacity for happiness is under our control, while 50% is associated with genetics and 10% with our environment.

Knowing that individuals have some degree of control over their happiness begs this next question: How can I experience more happiness?

- Practice kindness.
- Experiences trump purchases, so enjoy making memories rather than accumulating “stuff.”
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Choose happiness and turn down negativity.
- Nurture relationships and create meaningful connections with others.
- Forgive and forget. The past is the past – live in the present.
- Enjoy the natural environment all around.
- Share your talents, time, and money – live your values and beliefs.



“If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or objects.” —Albert Einstein

Cultivating Contentment

Has the hamster-wheel-of-life got you down? Tired of working to earn money to buy things that quickly need to be replaced with newer, better things? Do you find yourself thinking “if only I had a better job” or “if only our family could have this”?

Discontentment runs amuck these days. And while it is natural to compare oneself to others and dream about a fairy tale life, spending too much time and energy dwelling on what you don't have robs you of the opportunity to appreciate all that you do have.



According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, contentment is a state of being happy and satisfied. Achieving a true state of contentment reduces stress, improves outlook, relaxes your body, and allows you to enjoy life.

Individuals who report high levels of contentment share common practices.

- **Practice gratitude:** Look around and make note of all that you have to appreciate and be thankful for today.
- **Simplify:** De-clutter physical spaces and “de-schedule” yourself regularly. Give yourself permission to be spontaneous once in awhile.
- **Find purpose:** Align your daily activities with your values and beliefs. Having a goal fosters a sense of purpose – just make sure it is something that excites and energizes you.
- **Make connections:** Friendships and intimate relationships bring meaning to life.
- **Live in the moment:** Life is happening right now and there is no guarantee of the future. Savor and celebrate the present.
- **Find quiet:** Make space for silence to allow yourself the opportunity to connect with what is inside.

Making a few mindful adjustments may be just what is needed to cultivate contentment and enjoy happiness and satisfaction with who and what you are today.



“Comparison is the thief of joy.” —Theodore Roosevelt

Living in the Moment

Putting mindfulness into practice can be a challenging task. It takes Buddhist monks and yogi masters decades to perfect the art of around-the-clock mindfulness.

If you are interested in living more in the moment, start simply by trying a few of approaches listed below. Not all of them will feel like a good fit. Lean on the options that work best for helping you stay present and mindful of you, your environment, and your thoughts.



Breathe: As your breath is always with you, you have the ability to use it to draw your attention to the present anywhere and anytime. Focus on your breathing and the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen as you draw air in and exhale. Naturally your mind will wander. Gently bring your focus back to your breath.

Use Your Senses: Slow down your pace and take note of the smells, sounds, and sights around you. During a morning shower close your eyes and try to identify all of the sounds that you hear. At the grocery store focus on the many scents and smells coming from the aisles and deli. This technique can be done anywhere, anytime simply by focusing on one or more of your senses.

Meditation: Often individuals believe the goal of meditation is to be able to focus without distraction. In reality, meditation is about becoming more aware of when your mind wanders.

Start with short sessions lasting 3 to 10 minutes. Find a quiet place where you can sit or stand comfortably. Begin by noticing body sensations such as tightness in your shoulders or warmth in your cheeks. There is nothing that you have to do about these; just be aware of them.

Focus on your breath and body sensations. As your mind wanders draw your attention back to your breath. Gradually increase the duration of your meditation sessions. Guided meditation can be very helpful in training yourself to stay focused and present. Guided meditations are readily available online and may assist you in starting a meditation practice.



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Mindfulness Matters

Mindfulness is all about living in the moment. It is a state of active, open, and intentional attention on the present. Mindfulness involves being with your thoughts and feelings as they are and not reaching for them, rejecting them, nor pushing them aside.

Cultivating mindfulness offers a host of emotional and physical benefits.

Emotional Well-Being

Integrating mindfulness into your daily life means you have far less time to spend worrying about the future or what has happened in the past. Your attention to the present allows you to enjoy the pleasures of life as they occur.

Living in the moment enhances your ability to listen and recognize feelings and emotions in others. Ultimately this allows you to form deeper and more meaningful connections with others.

It is only when you stop “doing” and start focusing on just “being” that you can be an observer of your thoughts and feelings. Paying attention to your thoughts without judgment allows you to turn down the buzzing in your head. It opens your mind to new experiences and allows you to feel less threatened and anxious.

Being present with yourself reduces stress, depression, and anxiety and enhances feelings of happiness and well-being.

Physical Well-Being

Practicing mindfulness can:

- Lower stress levels.
- Reduce chronic pain.
- Improve sleep.
- Lower blood pressure.
- Ease gastrointestinal-related issues.

Embracing reality and practicing mindfulness meditation even a few times a day can improve health and overall well-being. Mindfulness is a powerful tool that can help individuals identify, understand, accept, and cope with their feelings and emotions.

The Original Mindfulness Challenge

HERE
and
NOW

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Mindfulness: What is it?

Multi-tasking seems to be a way of life these days.

- How often do you pound out e-mails between taking bites of your sandwich at lunch?
- Have you ever provided homework help as you folded clean laundry or swept the floor?
- Do you talk on the phone when you drive?

Society praises individuals who can complete multiple tasks at one time. It improves our efficiency and productivity.

Yet how often has this approach left you feeling stressed and depleted of both energy and patience? When was the last time you remember tasting the sandwich or noticing the beautiful sunset on your drive home?

Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice that encourages individuals to be more fully present in the moment – to taste the sandwich so to speak. Many experts define mindfulness as a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience.

Too often we spend time and energy thinking about what is going to happen, what should happen next, or what has happened in the past. Mindfulness encourages individuals to live in the present and fully experience what is happening at that precise moment. By the way, how are you feeling as you read and take in this information?

While it takes time to master the practice of mindfulness, the emotional and physical benefits are numerous. Try introducing mindfulness into your life today.

Mindfulness involves:

- Purposely focusing your attention on the present.
- Concentration or meditation
- Acceptance.
- Paying attention to thoughts and feelings without judgment.
- Being fully engaged in activity.



“Many experts define mindfulness as a state of active, open attention on the present.”

Mindfulness is *Not...*

Sometimes it is easier to wrap your brain around the concept of mindfulness if you better understand what it is NOT.

Following are examples of mindLESSness:

- Worrying excessively about past events.
- Forgetting important dates like birthdays and anniversaries.
- Missing dentist appointments and school, church, or work meetings.
- Misplacing your cell phone or car keys often.
- Distracting yourself with things like overeating, alcohol, gambling, or excessive exercise.
- Clumsiness or experiencing minor accidents like walking into objects because of inattention.
- Eating without being aware of the taste or smell of the food or the act of eating.
- Feeling “scatterbrained.”
- Inability to remember what someone just told you.
- Forgetting someone’s name after you have just heard it.
- Not remembering what you saw and heard on the drive to work.
- Forgetting to purchase key items at the grocery store.
- Multi-tasking throughout the day.
- Breaking and/or spilling things frequently.

Mindfulness exercises help center the mind and restore balance to our lives, tempering that “monkey mind” that persistently leaps from branch to branch. Rather than being led by thoughts and feelings, often influenced by past experiences and fears of future occurrences, we are able to live with full attention and purpose in the moment.

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