

A photograph of a forest path. The path is made of dirt and gravel, winding through tall, slender trees. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of green leaves, creating a soft, dappled light effect. The trees have thick, textured bark. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

BE NATURALLY FIT

*Mindfulness
Month*

Welcome to Mindfulness Month

Mindfulness is the path to becoming more accepting of ourselves and of others. This month we will focus on embracing our emotions, trusting your bodies, and slowing down so we can feel and hear what is happening within ourselves.



I started my mindfulness meditation practice during my yoga training and what I learned about the mind-body connection changed me forever. Mindfulness is one of our greatest tools for staying connected to ourselves and to our surroundings. When we are mindful, we are in the here and now, fully present. In my experience, mindfulness is about observing without criticizing and being compassionate with ourselves and with others.

When we practice mindfulness, we quiet our busy minds and find inner wisdom and strength. This month you will learn to listen to your body, tune in to your mind and develop the consciousness to clear your head and live a more soulful life.

HOMEWORK: Download the **Calm** app and complete seven days of meditation. Here's the link: www.calm.com

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Practice Everyday Mindfulness

Every moment in our day is an opportunity to practice mindfulness! Absent-mindedly eating when we're not hungry, snapping at our kids because our minds are somewhere else, or rushing through a task so quickly that we make errors—these are all times when practicing mindfulness would help.

By being mindful we check in with ourselves before responding with words we don't mean or acting in ways that aren't true to ourselves.

Benefits of Being Mindful

Being mindful has many physical, emotional and mental benefits. As we go through the month, I hope you will notice some of the effects below:

1. Reduced stress and anxiety
2. Less physical pain
3. Improved memory and cognitive function
4. Overall calmness
5. Increased creativity
6. Increased productivity
7. Greater connection to those around us

Meditate

“The goal of meditation isn’t to control your thoughts, it’s to stop letting them control you.”

—Jon Andre

When we meditate, we observe our thoughts as they arise and, little by little, let go of them. One way to do this is to focus our attention on the breath as it flows in and out. Each time our minds wander, we bring our attention back to our breath and leave our thoughts behind.



With meditation we are not trying to “not think.” Rather, we are trying to detach ourselves from our thoughts and eventually we will come to understand that thoughts—whether they are good, bad, worrisome or scary—are just thoughts. They are transient. We don’t have to act on them. We can just release them.

Throughout the month I will be sharing some easy meditation routines and breathing exercises. Start with a short sessions of 5 or 10 minutes but practice often so that meditation becomes a habit. Don’t be critical of yourself if you have difficulty focusing on your breath. Just accept that your thoughts have intruded and start the cycle again.

Walking Meditation

Daily meditation doesn’t have to mean sitting cross-legged on a yoga mat for extended periods of time. Walking meditation, or mindful walking, is a more active approach to meditation.

Walking meditation engages our senses and helps connect us with our environment and nature. Ideally we should choose a woodland or beach path for our mindful walk. Leave your phone at home (or at least off in your pocket) and be aware of the earth underneath you, the fresh air flowing into your body, and the sounds of nature. Try to stay connected to your mind and body and walk slowly and consciously.

As you walk and become increasingly aware of the beauty that is around you, your mind will grow quieter. Walking meditation is a skill that develops over time. The more you do it, the more awareness it will bring.

Simplify and Slow Down

“It’s not the daily increase but daily decrease. Hack away at the unessential.”

— Bruce Lee

Slowing down is essential to becoming more mindful. We women are multi-tasking machines! We have endless to-do lists and crowded schedules and we never do just one thing at a time. The result: stress, anxiety, cravings, and pure exhaustion.

Slowing down lets us see, feel and reflect.

What is serving me? Is running around like a lunatic helpful to my wellbeing? What could I let go off that is no longer useful?



When we slow down we can have time to find ways to simplify our lives so that we can start to feel calmness instead of agitation.

Here are some ideas to help you on your own journey to simpler:

DECLUTTER. Now is a great time to spring clean. Go through and get rid of the things that aren’t bringing you joy. If you don’t need it or it doesn’t serve a positive purpose, pass it on.

DON’T SWEAT the small stuff. We can’t do it all and we certainly can’t give 100% to everything we do. Allow yourself to not finish the laundry or skip the grocery store when you only need one item.

LIMIT CHOICES. It’s funny, we have so many choices available to us that many of us struggle to make any choice at all. Counter this by purposefully limiting your options and sticking to what you know works best for you.

MAKE TIME. When everything becomes a priority, nothing becomes a priority. Make time for the people and passions that light you up.

SPEND TIME disconnected. We will do a few digital detoxes this month so that we learn to unplug from our phones, emails and Netflix series. As fantastic and powerful as technology is, we consciously disconnect as well.

Manage Stress

When we are under stress, we are not mindful. By being aware of when we are under stress, we can use stress-reducing strategies and gain a sense of balance and positivity. Dealing with stress also drains our energy—energy that would be better used in creative and productive ways.

Here are some strategies for reducing stress:

PLAN AHEAD: By planning ahead we reduce “decision overload” that usually hits us at the end of the day when we are tired. Have you ever stood in front of a full fridge and been unable to decide what to have for dinner? Or had a nice night out planned but couldn’t choose what to wear? If you had made these decisions beforehand you could avoid decision overload.

REDUCE NEGATIVE THINKING: Once you begin to practice mindfulness, you will find it easier to avoid slipping into patterns of negative thinking. Knowing that these are only negative thoughts and that you don’t have to do anything about them will ease the stress that they generate.

STAY ACTIVE AND REST WELL: A sedentary lifestyle can cause both mental and physical stress. Physical activity produces feel-good hormones and keeps our bodies functioning properly. Exercise (physical stress) is necessary but must be balanced with periods of rest and renewal. It’s important to balance high intensity movement with low-impact movement and always rest when your body needs it.

EAT WELL: Eat foods that are wholesome, nourishing, healthy, and make you feel grounded. Sugar, no matter how tempting it may be, will only unbalance you further.

Here are some quick ways to reduce stress:

- Breathe deeply taking long inhales and exhales (4 counts each). I find it helps to repeat to myself, “this to shall pass.”
- Do 5 minutes of physical movement. Go for a quick walk, do 2 or 3 yoga poses, or just stretch and move. I guarantee you will feel better.
- Try essential oils. I love Doterra frankincense and other oils that I diffuse or rub on my feet.
- Surrender deeply to who you are and where you are, and accept it.
- Step outside and breath fresh air.
- Know that at all times, something will be out of balance. ALWAYS. Working towards perfection is only going to drive you crazy.

Open Your Heart

Your heart is your biggest energy center and your 4th primary chakra. Your heart is the wellspring of love, warmth, compassion and joy. Anger, jealousy and fear can also live in the heart if you allow them.

Many of us have lost the ability to listen to our hearts. Our hearts want to be heard and crave connection with others. When we live disconnected from our hearts, we are disconnected from our truest selves and we are not able to receive the love, joy and abundance that is around us.



To open your heart you must be in your body and feeling it all. All the emotions that bubble to the surface need to be acknowledged and not suppressed. This means feeling what hurts and not running from it. Let the pain reveal itself, and then let go of it. Be open to receive all that is present before us as it shows up and connect and engage with others in an open-hearted way.

Living in your heart means showing up to life and being fearless.

This month we will learn to listen to what our hearts are saying to us and acting on our heart's intentions. Quietening the ego-mind is NOT easy, yet is an important step towards living a whole-hearted life. The mind gets frantic when it is no longer in control and it will try to grab your attention when you start shifting your focus onto the heart. Ego-mind does not like being in the backseat!

Connect With Your Purpose

Do you ever feel like you go through life doing what is expected of you and never really stopping to check in with yourself? I hope that throughout this month your needs and desires will become more apparent to you. To get you started, here are some simple techniques that will help you connect with your purpose.

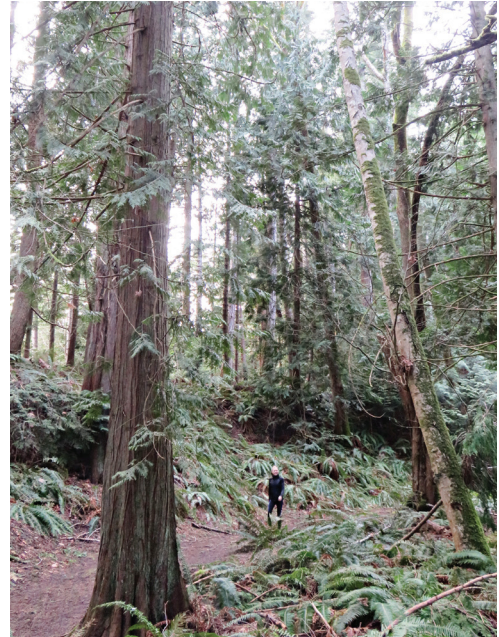
MEET YOUR NEEDS FIRST. It's not selfish to put yourself first. Meeting your physical needs--like exercise, sleep, and healthy eating--will make you a better parent, friend and partner.

SAY NO, OFTEN. You may at first feel like you are letting people down, but you can't continue to serve others if you aren't looking after yourself.

QUIET YOUR INNER CRITIC. Sometimes you just have to cut yourself some slack otherwise you get caught in the spiral of guilt, shame and inadequacy. Remember you are already doing a good job!

DO MORE OF WHAT LIGHTS YOU UP. Sure painting pictures of flowers might not move you forward in life, but if it make you happy, just do it. Make a list (on a piece of paper) of activities that make you happy. Cuddling puppies, knitting, sewing, baking, nailing pieces of wood together—whatever turns your crank. Don't overthink it. Then stick your list to the fridge and try to incorporate one of those things into each day. No action is too small and the tiniest effort will be enough to kickstart your intent.

Simply get out of your own way and have the courage to listen to what is true and act form this place of inner alignment.



Thank You!



Thanks for joining us on our **MINDFULNESS MONTH**.
I hope you find it useful and inspiring.

Rebecca