

Mindfulness During the Holidays

Podcast Transcript

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Mindfulness brings about a vision of peacefulness and calm. Nowadays, this is often not how we describe our holidays. We're more likely to see family members whizzing by to get to commitments on time or racing through stores together picking up last minute, semi-impersonal gifts for Aunt Bertha and Uncle Walter. We focus on checking things off of our to-do lists, rather than focusing on the actual experiences and truly living within our lives. With more to do and changes to your regular schedule, it can be hard to find your Zen during the holidays.

This holiday season commit to make a change. Practice mindfulness and soak in those precious moments. Commit to less and be present for more. Examine your schedule as a whole and determine what is most important to you. Saying "No" is often necessary for maintaining balance during this busy season. Listen to your body and know when it's time to schedule some down time.

Turning your focus to gratitude is a great way to bring fulfillment and peace to your holidays. Be mindful of the loved ones in your life that you are grateful for and spend quality time with them. Start and end your day listing three things you are grateful for. You can make this a meditative practice, keep a gratitude journal or even spread your gratitude on social media, publicly sharing who and what you are thankful for.

In realizing all you have to be thankful for, the holidays become a great time to give back. Donate items that could benefit others. Serve a meal to the homeless. Organize shelves at a food bank, or help an elderly neighbor decorate for the holiday season. Harness your holiday spirit and spread it around. Be present during these opportunities and notice your feelings, the sights and sounds around you, and all you have to be thankful for this season.

When you hear the term "mindfulness" you often hear it paired with "living in the moment." Many of us have trouble with this, especially during special times. This season, stop living behind the camera, documenting for the future, and live in the moment, fully present and engaged. Take a few pictures, then set the camera down. Focus with your eyes on your family members' faces, hear what they are saying, notice their actions and reactions, and give them your full attention. Your holiday gatherings will be much richer and satisfying when you're focused on what's going on right in front of you.

And when it all becomes too much, as is often the case during this season, take five minutes for mindfulness practice. Sit quietly and focus on your breath. Focus on your body and let your breathing slow down. Keep a relaxed posture and redirect your mind when it wanders away from your breath. This practice in stillness can re-center you and help you regain your peace during stressful times. You can also

try beginning or ending your day with this short practice. The peacefulness of this simple exercise can magically spill over into your daily life.

This holiday season, remember: Commit to less and be present for more.

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