

# Mindfulness—Meditation—Slowing Down in Our Daily Lives

By Bob Wilson BS, DTR

## What is mindfulness?



The opposite of mindfulness is mindlessness. It is being on “automatic pilot,” out of touch with our bodies and our experience in the moment. For most of us, our minds are often constantly wandering. We are often quite literally “not here” in the present. And we can be absent in many ways from the best moments of our lives because we are caught up in our thoughts, memories, plans, or feelings.

Mindfulness is moment-to-moment, nonjudgmental awareness. It involves paying careful and detailed attention in the present moment—just noticing and exploring whatever our experience is from one moment to the next, without judging it as positive or negative.

### **Mindfulness includes just observing:**

- Paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, without judgment.
- Allowing yourself to just “be”—versus always having to “do” something or change circumstances or your experience in some way.
- Objectively observing your experience, and perhaps quietly naming it to yourself (such as “thinking,” “planning,” “remembering,” or “sad,” “happy,” “worried”).
- When your mind wanders, simply bringing it back to your breath or other object of focus and the present moment—again and again.

### **Mindfulness meditation**

Formal practices of mindfulness are at the heart of mindfulness meditation—also known as “insight meditation.” Mindfulness meditation enables us to be more grounded in the present moment and develop a greater understanding of our experience and how we relate to it.

One of the benefits of this type of meditation is that we can focus the meditation on the experiences we typically deal with every day. We learn and practice mindfulness meditation by focusing on the breath—but we can also focus the meditation on our thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, and experiences.

**Mindfulness meditation will help you learn and experience nonjudgmental awareness in the moment.** Practicing mindfulness in meditation can change the quality of your everyday life by increasing your awareness and your ability to be present and alive in the moment, attuned to all of your experience and the world around you.

You can also practice mindfulness in many ways during your ordinary daily activities. Being mindful of your experience during your activities can be very enriching—and

informative. Everyday mindfulness can also help you prevent and decrease stress and other unpleasant experiences.

### **Try doing ordinary activities “mindfully” as you slow down**

There are many ways to practice mindfulness. Try doing some of your daily activities mindfully. Consider the activity the most important thing you can do in the moment—and something that deserves your special attention. **Slow down and pay attention moment by moment.**

**Using all of your senses, pay attention to your experience in your body and your mind.** What do you see? What do you hear? What scents or smells do you notice? What do you feel with your hands or in other parts of your body? What feelings or moods arise? What thoughts do you notice?

Practicing mindfulness is not to “think about” your experience, but simply to notice your thoughts. As thoughts and feelings arise, note them to yourself, and allow them to change or shift as they will—and gently bring your attention back to the activity at hand, and your direct sensations.

#### **Activities to practice doing mindfully could include:**

- Making and drinking tea or coffee mindfully. Notice each step in the process, every sensation and every detail. Drink in slow motion, noticing every aspect of your experience as you sit and enjoy your drink.
- Taking a slow-motion bath or shower. Using all your senses, simply notice and enjoy a warm bath or shower.
- Washing dishes mindfully. Consider washing the dishes to be the most important thing you can do in the moment. Wash them thoroughly, with careful attention to your complete experience.
- Taking a mindful walk. Notice every part of your body and all of your sensory experience as you walk. Notice all of the details in the environment around you—take them in with all of your senses. What do you see, hear, smell, and feel?
- Brushing your hair in slow motion for several minutes, or brushing your teeth mindfully and thoroughly. Pay attention to every detail from start to finish.
- Taking a mindful drive. Notice every thing you do and experience during the drive, including your experiences in your body, your feelings, and your thoughts.

## Lifestyle Awareness Training: Do less. Enjoy what you do more. How?

- ✓ Just don't do something. Sit there! Have unscheduled time. Practice slowing down and doing nothing every day. Practice useless gazing. Really, *observe* the world around you. You will probably feel uncomfortable at first. Choose to act *outside of* your normal routines.
- ✓ **Notice (be mindful of) what you are doing with each of your daily activities:**

When you wake up	Notice your “hungers”—for food, rest, affection, accomplishment, and nurturing activities
As you get ready for work	When you go for a walk
When you use the toilet	While you talk on the phone
While you brush and floss your teeth	As you drive your car
As you wash your hands	When you grocery shop or do errands
When you take out the garbage	As you turn on the TV—also notice how <i>what you see</i> effects your emotions
Be present as you wash dishes or clean up the kitchen	Be deeply present as you meet others
Notice the sensations as you drink coffee or tea	When you get sleepy, celebrate your blessings of a comfortable place to lay your head
Be present when you hug someone	
Notice how your breakfast and other meals taste	
- ✓ **Pay attention.** Don't just do your activities on *autopilot*. Have a sense of the sacredness of your life. Your life is rich and valuable. Celebrate your wild and precious life!
- ✓ **Resist rushing.** An example from Thich Nhat Hanh's book *Present Moment Wonderful Moment* (mindfulness verses for every day life) and *Peace Is Every Step* deal with driving, something that most of us do every day.

*When we are driving, we tend to think of arriving, and we sacrifice the journey for the sake of the arrival. But life is to be found in the present moment, not in the future...each mile we drive, each step we take, has to bring us into the present moment. When we see a red light or a stop sign, we can smile at it and thank it, because...it is helping us return to the present moment. The red light is a bell of mindfulness. We may have thought of it as an enemy, preventing us from achieving our goal. But now we know the red light is our friend, helping us resist rushing and calling us to return to the present moment where we can meet life, joy, and peace.*

Another excellent book is *Practicing The Power Of Now* (pages 21-23, 30-38) by Eckert Tolle.

See also *The Beginner's Guide To Insight Meditation*, (pp. 157 – 161), by Arinna Weisman.

## Meditation—Why and How—Cleanse and Train the Mind



**Learning this skill helps free you from self-destructive compulsions.  
Discover the art of mental self-control and mindfulness.**

**We all recognize the value in taking care of our bodies.** We cleanse, feed, and clothe them; we provide for adequate shelter; and we are at least aware of the need for and value of regular exercise for our health and well-being. Whenever our body gets sick, we try to figure out what went wrong and get something to fix it, if possible.

**Rarely do we take time to attend to our minds.** Everything is mind-made, yet we frequently take our minds totally for granted. Mind-made means that everything (our experience of life) is MADE in our minds. Our thoughts occur in response to outer and inner events. First, there is the event—then there occurs instantaneously our REACTION to it.

Our reaction is based on our FILTERS, which are our opinions, beliefs, evaluations, conclusions. The feeling tone that we experience is sculpted by our inner views—really made in our minds!

Our thoughts over time form patterns of thinking or habits of mental reactions. Examples are thoughts of joy and contentment, love, compassion, or happiness, or perhaps impatience, pessimism, sadness, anxiety, or cravings.

Our response to what happens in our world starts in our mind—with our thoughts—and is expressed in our actions. Visit [www.balancedweightmanagement.com](http://www.balancedweightmanagement.com) for Mind is the Source of Happiness and Pain and The Nature of Mind: What Is It? Where Is It? Also, Make Your Mind An Ocean articles.

The first thing we need to do with our minds is to “clean them up!” Just like with our houses, if we don’t occasionally take time to organize our houses and throw things out that are no longer needed, over time our houses *and* minds become full of clutter.

***What mind has put in mind, only mind can clean out.*** The more we practice thinking in a certain way, the more habitual that way of thinking becomes. It feels normal and natural—it becomes a habit of mind.

**Meditation allows us to *notice* the content of the thoughts floating through our minds.** During meditation we learn to drop—from the mind—the thoughts that we do not want to keep.

We can drop the inner dialog or story—that is, we make the breath the *object* of our meditation. We perhaps just focus on the breath coming in and going out, and when we lose our focus on the breath, we just immediately come back when we catch ourselves lost in fantasy, planning the future, or worrying about the past—that is, we just let go of the story line—the content of the thoughts.

We can also *label thoughts*—like thinking, remembering, worrying, and planning. We just step back and look at them. When thoughts arise, we just gently observe them. We practice just noticing them, trying not to judge them.

This process takes lots of repetition, since for most of us, our minds are undisciplined. Our thoughts wander off in all directions—compulsive planning, worrying, fantasies about many things. **We have to train our minds to STOP...to drop the content of our thoughts—and to come back to the present moment.** It takes bringing our mind back again and again to the object of meditation (such as the breath, a word, a sound, or even walking with awareness in walking meditation).

**Meditation is really like doing push-ups or weight training for the mind**—it gives the mind muscle to perform the valuable skill to do what you want it to do—rather than always being carried along by out-of-control thoughts. Mental strength comes from working against the resistance of undisciplined thoughts—until we finally gain enough mental potency to stop our *train of thoughts* mid-thought. We can then direct our minds where we want them to go, rather than going wherever they take us!

Through the *practice* of abiding in a calmer state during meditation—we cease the torrent of chattering thoughts. We practice letting go of our regular roles, routines, and identities—everything we press on to accomplish every day. Over time we can achieve a serenely settled state of mind. Ah. Practicing meditation on a regular basis helps us come to a calmer, more peaceful, and aware state.

**Meditation is a terrific stress-reduction technique.** Many times we might find ourselves turning to food, alcohol, or drugs to help us calm down (these choices DO work in the short term but there are harmful effects in the long-term) when we practice meditation you will experience the relaxation response in your body. It takes a few more minutes to occur (perhaps 5-10 minutes) but it has no harmful side effects, only beneficial ones. I have even meditated with various friends over the telephone! We make a date with each other, I call them up, we check in for a few minutes. Then we set our intention to be of benefit to ourselves and other people in the world through our spending the time, and then I put the phone down. We may meditate for 15-30 minutes. Then I whistle into the phone signaling that the session is over. We then set up a date for the next time. It is SO helpful to have the support to develop this regular practice. Explore the *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction* (MBSR) information in the resource section. ***Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*** by Jon Kabat-Zinn Ph.D. is an excellent resource.

### *Research on effects of meditation*

Four decades of research have shown that meditation has significant positive effects on both physical and psychological health. Here are some examples of research findings.

#### **Cardiovascular disease**

- Reduced risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- Reduced blood pressure.
- Improved insulin resistance.
- Improved cardiac autonomic nervous system tone.
- Reduced use of medication for high blood pressure.
- Reduced death rates.

#### **Chronic pain**

- Decreased pain and distress.
- Improved daily functioning.
- Less anger.

#### **Fibromyalgia**

- Improved physical symptoms.
- Decreased psychological distress.

### **Skin disorders**

- More rapid clearing of psoriasis outbreaks.

### **Immune function**

- Improved immune response to flu vaccine.

### **Sleep disturbance**

- Improved sleep quality, including falling asleep more quickly, sleeping longer, and using less sleep medications.

- Decreased sleep disturbance.

### **Anxiety and panic disorder**

- Reduced anxiety.
- Decreased panic.

### **Substance abuse**

- Reduced drug and alcohol abuse.
- Improved smoking cessation.

## *Additional Research on effects of meditation*

### **Eating disorders**

- Decreased bingeing and depression.
- Increased eating self-efficacy.

### **Stress and psychological distress**

- Reduced stress.
- Decreased psychological distress.
- Enhanced quality of life.
- Less mood disturbance.

- Reduced depression.
- Reduced hopelessness behavior.

### **Brain functioning**

- Possible “neuroprotective effects,” helping to preserve attention and cognition and prevent dementia as we age.
- Improved attention.

## **I need to slow down. I'm movin' too fast. How can I do it?**

Notice that we live in an environment—modern American life—that is over busy and over stimulated. This contributes to restlessness and a feeling of depletion, compulsion and overwhelm. We are trained to multitask. It has come to feel like we are wasting time if we do nothing (rest) or if we just do *one thing* at a time. We also might find that we are *not enjoying the thing that we are doing* because we are always *rushing to the next thing* that has to be done on our list. We have become human *doings* instead of human *beings*. We have an addiction to technology and consumerism and have lost the ability to live life with wisdom, inner peace and enjoyment. To go SLOWLY in this society is to go “against the grain.”

Our collective choices (our minds) have created a culture out of balance.



To change the way one lives requires intention, courage and lots of practice. Peer and cultural pressure keep us on the “river of excess” for security to feel accepted. How can you get *unstuck*? Build up the confidence in yourself? First, **accept the responsibility for your present level of activities** (with no self-put downs) and **notice the results**. You can then see what changes you would want to make in the future.

**Cultivate daily choices and insights that support balance.**

## Explore your rushing energy.

**Write ideas on index cards and review:**

- ✓ Pay attention to how it feels in your body.
- ✓ When you're stressed out, pause. Take some down time. Reflect on all of the things that you are currently doing right now in your life. Notice the *habit of mind* of feeling rushed and pressured. The mind gets addicted to the pressured state. We run on adrenaline.
- ✓ You can ASK yourself: Do you need to do this thing? Really? When you make an appointment, when you get in the car—be deliberate about it. Prioritize and simplify?
- ✓ What would happen (inside) if you didn't *choose to do* all these things? Example, choose to do *some* things versus *all* things? Would your mind be more calm and peaceful? Centered?
- ✓ Leave lots of time in your schedule so you don't feel anxiety and pressure to get somewhere.
- ✓ We all feel like we are “so busy.” Our lives are living us. We feel that we don't have a choice. We feel like a victim. Notice what we say to ourselves: “I'm so busy because I *have* to do something.” Versus “I *choose to do...*” Ask: What effect does this change in focus have on your mind? Does it make you feel calmer and less pressured? Does it make things feel more like *opportunities versus obligations*?
- ✓ Notice a voice that says, “not fast enough!” (an addiction to accomplishment). Look at the emotions underneath: terror, unworthiness, loneliness, aversion and desire (running away from pain or compulsively towards something)
  - ASK yourself: Why am I hurrying? What am I feeling? Do I need to slow down? Am I having fun and enjoying what I am doing? Do your *brain and heart* dream up commitments that your *body can't keep*?

- ✓ **Where do you get stuck in making priorities? Check the underlying motives:**
  - “I have to do it” versus “I choose to do it?”
  - A deep desire to be of service?
  - People’s requests?
  - Perfectionism?
  - Professional/job requirements?
  - People pleasing? Fear? Care about other people’s perception of me?
  - Praise/recognition/expectations? **Do I communicate my limitations?**
  - Feeling important? My role is critical! “I see myself as a responsible person, therefore I have to...” (To fit my image of who I am.) “I’m so important, I have to...”
  - Buying into societies values?
  
- ✓ Accept yourself with your limitations. You’re NOT a project to be changed. You can change through the process of awareness and self-acceptance, NOT by pushing and punishing yourself. Face your present lifestyle imbalance with gentleness and joy! Congratulations, you noticed! You now CAN practice making changes.

**Explore alternatives to your present schedule.**

How do you spend your time?

Sunday 24 hours	Monday 24 hours	Tuesday 24 hours	Wednesday 24 hours	Thursday 24 hours	Friday 24 hours	Saturday 24 hours

**How do you fit in:** house cleaning and maintenance, family (husband, children, elderly parents), friends, gardening, job and travel time, professional commitments, spiritual connection, volunteering, shopping for daily needs, grocery shopping, fixing food, time for exercise, recreation, paying bills, watching TV, computer, e-mails, 12-Step or other support groups, time to do nothing (practice useless gazing)?

- ✓ Make a list and figure out the approximate time that each task requires.
- ✓ Will your “to do list” fit in 24 hours? Fit in 7 days a week? Can you really get it ALL done without going crazy or feeling overwhelmed?

**Earlier in my life, I did this evaluation and found that I needed 9.5 days per week to accomplish all that I was doing each week.** I was astounded. I finally understood WHY I was so stressed out and overwhelmed. At that time, I was drinking alcohol and using drugs to help me cope. I noticed that I needed to do something different.



- ✓ To make changes, the first step was to observe that my present pattern was harmful to me. I learned about my patterns and how they affected me by keeping a journal.

### **Explore your present lifestyle patterns and their consequences:**

Here's what I learned about my patterns and their consequences.

Taken from my journal on February 22, 1992:

#### **What I've learned:**

1. My body and emotions have specific, definable limits.
2. When I spend all of my energy at work, there isn't much time or energy left over for friendship and fun.
3. I become ill.
4. I overeat.
5. I become depressed, exhausted, and enraged.
6. These results are NOT fun!

On one other occasion, I learned about *personal boundaries* when **someone requests something of me.**

1. I get asked to do something that will push me beyond my limits.
2. I feel guilt. I want to please, to help out.
3. I want to be MORE than human. I don't like having limits!
4. Great distress spirals into depression, anger and compulsive choices.
5. OOPS, these results aren't fun either!

Through keeping a journal, I discovered my patterns and gained knowledge about the consequences of my daily choices. I then contemplated OPTIONS. What could I do differently? As I pruned back my life, how would this choice help me? I sought out the help of a counselor to advise me and help me sort through options. I rehearsed limit-setting messages and new ways of responding.

- ✓ The next step was to come up with a PLAN to do something different. My schedule was "all work and no play time". Taken from my journal:
  1. Cut back on my professional and work commitments.
  2. Take extra time for daily meditation, spiritual reflection, and study
  3. On Tuesday afternoon get a massage & go to a comedy club
  4. When I get my paycheck, I will put no money in savings or giving to others. It is to ALL to go for FUN! I tend to be over responsible and pay all of my bills first, before I allow myself any fun. A note: I usually pay all my bills off as I go. I rarely use credit to fund my householder needs. I also do frequently give to various charities. In this season of my life, I had gotten out of balance.
  5. I will call up several friends and go out for dinner, and a hike to a beautiful spot.

I actually followed through with the above plan. After awhile, with lots of practice, I was able to change how I spent my time. My life gradually came back into a healthful balance. Ah. My mental, emotional and physical health improved. I still have to watch and be vigilant. I still have *tendencies* to get over committed. **My brain and heart still can make commitments that by body can't keep!** When this happens, I laugh at myself, say, "Oh, Bobby sweetheart, here we go again. I love you. What do you think you want to do differently? Any ideas?" I then PAUSE. I REFLECT ON all of the ideas that I have just shared with you. I come up with a plan and make changes. My life then comes back into balance. Yay! For me, it took 2 – 3 years to change my habit of "movin' too fast."

**So, how about you?** I encourage you to explore your present lifestyle patterns and their consequences. Notice what happens for you. Come up with a plan. Try out baby steps towards a new, healthier and more balanced life. Honor each step you take. Have fun and enjoy your journey.

An excellent resource on this area is *Take Time For Your Life* by Cheryl Richardson.

**Questions and reminders that I used after reflecting on these ideas; I came up with my personal maintenance schedule—what do I need to be a healthy, happy camper?**

**Consider the aspiration: May I free my heart and mind from suffering.**

What had I learned from this exercise?

How can I integrate this into my life to change my future?

Remember EVERY DAY, to rearrange my lifestyle according to what is important.

What ongoing choices will I make?

Have realistic expectations.

Persistence pays off. You create your world through your choices. Think about what you want to create for yourself and what daily choices will bring that to you. Take the time. **Nurture the 9-P's:** prioritize, plan and prepare, practice, persist with patience, apply positive and powerful problem solving!

**Take Action! Worksheet for Your New Life:**

Sunday 24 hours	Monday 24 hours	Tuesday 24 hours	Wednesday 24 hours	Thursday 24 hours	Friday 24 hours	Saturday 24 hours

**This life is about CHOICES. Learn about where your and other people's choices lead us.**

**Towards well-being and harmony? Or, towards disease? Over time, healthy choices form healthy habits.**

# EATING AWARENESS TRAINING

## Ψ Becoming More Aware Of Your Relationship With Food Ψ

By Bob Wilson BS, DTR



Our body is precious—treat it with care.

When you eat, eat slowly and *listen to your body*.

Let your stomach tell you when to stop—

NOT your eyes, or your tongue or your emotions.

Become more aware. You can increase the satisfaction in your eating by exploring the sensual qualities of foods. Notice WHAT...and HOW you are eating!

### **STEPS involve using all 5 senses:**

1. STOP!
2. LOOK!
3. TOUCH IT!
4. SMELL IT!
5. TASTE IT...SLOWLY!
6. LISTEN!

### **METHOD, WHEREVER POSSIBLE:**

Beautiful settings—make it a celebration with table settings, place mats, candles, and creative garnishing.

Create a feeling of consciousness, delight and pleasure about your eating!

1. **STOP!** Pause. Become quiet. Take a moment. Step out of the rush of daily activities. Sit down with the food in front of you.

**CLOSE YOUR EYES AND RELAX.**

Take a deep breath and release it. Be aware of all the numerous people who helped provide you with the contents of the meal, as well as the earth, water and sunshine—all were necessary for you to have the food. Many elements are interconnected. Cultivate the attitude of thankfulness and awareness about your food choices.

**OPEN YOUR EYES....**

2. **LOOK!** at the food. REALLY observe it. What does it LOOK like? Shapes? Colors? Kinds of foods? The table setting?
3. **SMELL IT!** Pick up the plate of food. Smell it—notice the aromas (90 % of taste is smell). Just savor the smell of the foods.
4. **TOUCH IT!** Caress the food with your finger tips. What textures, temperatures, resistance do you

notice? Is the temperature hot, warm or cold?

5. **TASTE IT!** (Slowly!) Allow it to touch the taste receptors of the tongue. Be conscious of textures, flavors, temperatures. Roll the food around on your tongue. Is the food primarily sweet, sour, salty, bitter? Is the texture smooth, rough, chewy, liquidy? Practice allowing 30 seconds between bites of food. Remember, the **ONLY** place you can taste foods is in your mouth!
6. **LISTEN TO IT!** What sounds do you hear as you are chewing?

### **WITH EACH MOUTHFUL, HAVE A CONSCIOUS THOUGHT:**

**Gently remember,**

1. This is material (building materials) that is used to fuel up your **AMAZING** machine—your body— for a 24-hour period.
2. Enjoy the taste. Celebrate the diversity of flavors—Yum, YUM!
3. Chew slowly. Do you like to eat? Do you enjoy the taste of food? The **ONLY** place you can enjoy food is in your **MOUTH!**
4. Pause to enjoy some water to drink.
5. **NOTICE** when you start to feel satisfied and **STOP EATING!** It's **NOT** your last meal. You will be able to eat again!

### **SAY GOOD-BYE TO ANY REMAINING FOOD!**

#### **OTHER SUGGESTIONS:**

1. At the table, start leaving a little bit of food on your dish, even one bite (1 tsp.), until you learn that your stomach, **NOT** the empty plate, ought to be the signal to stop eating.
2. **PAUSE** and look at the food with authority. **ASK**, “Do I really want to eat this? What is my body going to do with it? Can it nourish me and promote good health? Do I want to eat this only because it looks pretty? If that is the reason, then I had better enjoy just **LOOKING** at it and not hide it out of sight in my stomach!” It's just a work of art!
3. Swallow the food that is in your mouth before you load up the fork again! Don't rush—how can the next bite, or second helping, give you any more pleasure than the one you're eating now?
4. Chew thoroughly and slowly. Up to 20 times—there is no hurry!
5. Put the fork/spoon, etc. down between bites.
6. Put the sandwich **DOWN** between bites! No one is going to **STEAL** it!
7. Pay attention to taste. Enjoy it! Give thanks for it. **WHAT YOU EAT BECOMES YOU!**
8. Use smaller glasses/plates/bowls—it makes the food portions **APPEAR** larger.
9. Eat a salad or vegetables first—make it a large serving.

Savor your food. **BE CONSCIOUS** of every bite. Often eating a meal in less than twenty minutes, or a snack in less than ten minutes is too fast. Listen to your body. When you are satisfied, stop eating.

**REMEMBER, IT'S NOT YOUR LAST MEAL.  
YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EAT AGAIN!!!**

- *Intuitive Eating* by Evelyn Tribole M.S., R.D. and Elyse Resch M.S., R.D. is an excellent resource on honoring your hunger, enjoying the pleasures of food and feeling your fullness.
- *Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food.* Jan Chozen Bays, MD. Shambhala Publications, 2009.

## Daily Personal 5-Minute Check-In

In order to maintain balance in life and overcome stress, practice this skill regularly. Through practice, you become your own lifestyle coach.

Healthy weight and fitness can be achieved by cultivating balance in mind, body, and lifestyle. The way you do it is to go inside yourself. Ask yourself, “How do I feel? What do I need? Do I need to ask others for help? Can I meet my needs myself? Do I need some ‘quiet time’ to think things over?”

You’re worth the effort it takes!

### **Be More Aware of Your Body: Tune In, Take an “Inner Journey”**

- ✓ Let go of your external life. Give yourself some space.
- ✓ Take a deep breath and cross the boundary to your inner life.
  
- ✓ **Ask yourself these questions:**
  1. Am I physically hungry (what level)?
  2. Am I experiencing stress symptoms in my body? What do they feel like?
  3. What feelings are present? How can I fill empty feelings that are not hunger?
  4. What could I do to meet my needs?
  5. Do I just need a between-meal snack?
  6. Do I really want to splurge?
  
- ✓ Look at yourself with courage, kindness, honesty and self-respect.
- ✓ Return to your external life and take any actions suggested by your inner journey.
- ✓ Your personal action plan is answered by the question: What one thing could I do that would have the biggest effect on my success?

### **On your own or in your support group**

- ✓ What do you feel good about?
- ✓ What was your plan last week?
- ✓ Think about what you learned and form a plan for this week

### **This week’s action plan might be to:**

- ✓ Keep a food and activity diary—and discover patterns.
- ✓ Practice healthier eating: Try new foods and recipes.
- ✓ Celebrate physical activity.
- ✓ Enlist the support of others.
- ✓ See yourself in a more positive way.

### **It’s a gift to yourself when you choose to apply the five skill areas!**

- ✓ Healthy eating.
- ✓ Physical activity.
- ✓ Self-esteem.
- ✓ Self-management.
- ✓ Support.

Adapted from the *Freedom From Diets* curriculum Used with permission

## About the Author of *Lighter & Free From the Inside Out*

“Someone who has been there” writes this playbook. I have personally kept off about 250 pounds for over 35 years (having weighed 400 pounds in the eighth grade) and am in recovery from alcohol and drugs for over 21 years. **My lifestyle behaviors were out-of-control and unhealthy. How did I make lasting changes? I found that success at losing weight and keeping it off requires learning a series of new skills.**

I am also a Registered Dietetic Technician who has been in the field of Health Education for over 25 years and has taught non-dieting healthy living classes in Portland, Oregon for over 19 years.

The information in this book is “tried and true”—it has been verified by thousands of people as being extremely helpful and personally transformative. I myself have needed to learn about and practice all of the topics listed in this book. My extensive work with such a large number of people provides a reliable base of proven help. (See [Bob's EXPANDED STORY](#) on website) **It shares in a dramatic and honest way one person's journey** of transforming the root causes of my overweight and suggests that each person look into himself or herself to unravel their underlying patterns and sculpt new beginnings. People can relate to my journey, it is their own story. Every part of the playbook nurtures hope. It also shares, in an intimate way, one person's journey from intense self-destruction to loving self-care.

### My Story

#### Discover skill power, not will power

**Skill #1: Take time to create a new life.** If I don't make the time to evaluate my patterns, select skills to try out, and practice them, I find myself stuck with the same old habits that kept me unhealthy.

**#2: Pay attention.** I couldn't change what I didn't observe. Keeping a lifestyle journal is like looking in a mirror. I can see the type and amounts of food I eat each day, and how my emotions, people, places, and events influence my choices. I can notice my problem eating and lifestyle patterns. I can also see the benefits of trying out new foods or different lifestyle choices.

**#3: Make great tasting, healthy eating a priority**—even in the midst of a hectic lifestyle. I plan ahead with menu planning that celebrates vegetables and fruits. I use food to fuel my busy lifestyle and to provide energy for all the activities I enjoy.

**#4: Move more.** The reward for consistent physical activity is vibrancy! I began to feel the power, to celebrate the inner strength and sense of well being that come from allowing my body to experience the joy of movement. I make fitness a priority. I plan family and personal vacations around activities, or invite a colleague to “do business” over a walk rather than lunch. I go on hikes to beautiful natural areas. I walk to the bank to use the teller machine. My increased physical abilities brought me a sense of awe and appreciation for life and freedom.

**#5: Learn the skills for emotional nurturing.** These skills helped me transform emotional eating and low self-esteem. I learned to celebrate my life! I became a compassionate and loving friend—to me!

**#6: Get help.** Counseling and support groups have been invaluable. I tried to fix the “unfixable family, friends, and workplaces.” This proved to be quite frustrating, unproductive, and self-destructive. I didn't have any role



Me at 260 pounds — my high school graduation picture. Top weight 400 pounds.



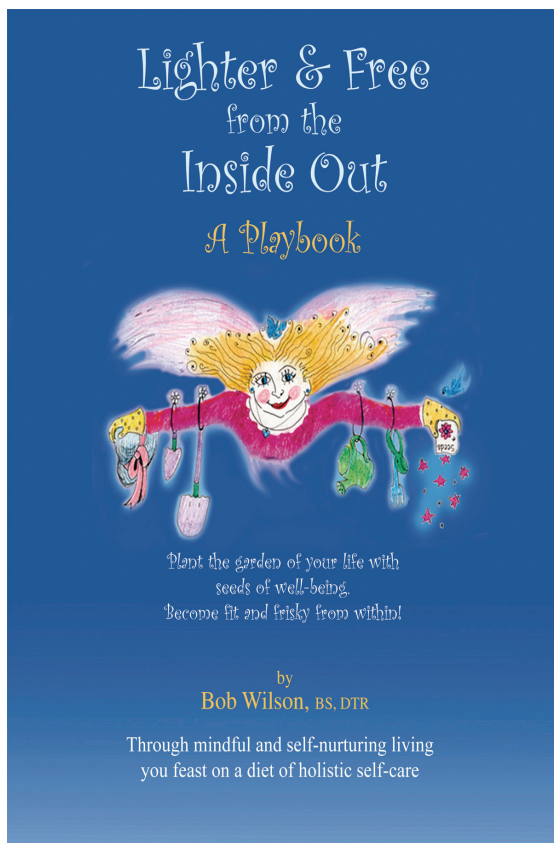
At my maximum, I weighed about 250 pounds more than shown here on a hike I could not have done before the weight loss!

models about how to live a healthy life and to find out about wholesome relationships, problem solving, and conflict management. Through reading books, individual counseling, and support groups, I was able to dismantle unproductive responses to life events. I learned to be my own personal lifestyle coach and guide.

**#7: Cultivate life-long health.** Learning and practicing all these skills can bring friskiness and well being throughout all of the seasons of our lives. Weight is managed, not cured. It's an ongoing investment in you. It is similar to good dental hygiene. Making the investment in yourself pays rich dividends: You can chew foods of any texture without problems; you don't experience the pain of gum disease or cavities; you save lots of money; you feel self-empowered and capable because of your self-discipline.

### Be free to climb up mountains!

**As you learn about your choices and the patterns they form, make small changes, and learn new skills, then day-by-day you form new habits. You gradually become healthier, happier, and thinner! Over time, you learn what works and what doesn't work for you. You cultivate within yourself the answers to the challenges you face. Visit other Essential Skills & oodles of resources in the Playbook and on Bob's Website that provide the essential nutrients to help your life blossom into well-being.**



In this book, you'll discover how you can create healthy, enjoyable, and sustainable changes in your life. You will come to understand how each of your daily choices affects your body, mind, and spirit, and how everything is interconnected.

### Become Your Own Lifestyle Coach as You Learn Twelve Essential Skills

We'll explore the process of making lasting changes in areas that matter most for *you*. You'll learn lots about yourself, discover ways to get back on track when you fall back to old habits, and learn how to keep motivated to achieve your dreams

### Explore visions of health and transform them into realities. You make the difference!

To order the playbook: [www.balancedweightmanagement.com](http://www.balancedweightmanagement.com) or e-mail Bob at [lighterandfree@gmail.com](mailto:lighterandfree@gmail.com)

**Discover how to become your own mindful and compassionate lifestyle self-manager as you cultivate twelve essential skills that create life-long well-being, a healthy weight, and a more vibrant friskiness.**



# Mindfulness resources

## Books

- *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life.* Thich Nhat Hanh, Bantam, 1991.
- *The Miracle of Mindfulness!* Thich Nhat Hanh, Beacon Press, 1987.
- *The Three-Minute Meditator.* David Harp and Nina Smiley. Mind's Eye Press, 2008.
- *Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food.* Jan Chozen Bays, MD. Shambhala Publications, 2009.
- *Making a Change For Good: A Guide to Compassionate Self-Discipline.* Cheri Huber, Shambhala Publications, 2007.
- *Practicing The Power of Now.* Eckhardt Tolle. New World Library, 1999.
- *The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have.* Mark Nepo, Conari Press, 2000.
- *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times.* Pema Chodron, Shambhala, 2005.
- *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life.* Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, Hyperion, 2005.
- *The Wise Heart: A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology.* Jack Kornfield, PhD, Bantam, 2009.
- *A Path with Heart: A Guide through the Perils and Pitfalls of Spiritual Life.* Jack Kornfield, PhD, Bantam, 1993.

## CDs and digital downloads

- *Breathing: The Master Key to Self-Healing.* Andrew Weil, MD, 2000.
- *Buddhist Meditation for Beginners.* Jack Kornfield, PhD, 2006.
- *Cultivating the Heart of Compassion.* Ram Dass, 1988.
- *Don't Bite the Hook: Finding Freedom from Anger, Resentment, and Other Destructive Emotions.* Pema Chodron, 2008.
- *Guided Meditation: Six Essential Practices to Cultivate Love, Awareness, and Wisdom.* Jack Kornfield, PhD, 2007.
- *Guided Meditations for Busy People.* Bodhipaksa, 2005.
- *Guided Mindfulness Meditation.* Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, 2005.
- *How to Meditate with Pema Chodron: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind.* Pema Chodron, 2008.
- *Insight Meditation: An In-Depth Correspondence Course.* Sharon Salzberg, and Joseph Goldstein, 2004.
- *Living Everyday Zen.* Charlotte Joko Beck, 2008.
- *Meditation for Optimum Health: How to Use Mindfulness and Breathing to Heal Your Body and Refresh Your Mind.* Andrew Weil, MD, and Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, 2001.
- *Mindful Living: A Collection of Teachings on Love, Mindfulness, and Meditation.* Thich Nhat Hahn, 2005.
- *Mindfulness for Beginners.* Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, 2006.
- *Radical Self-Acceptance.* Tara Brach, PhD, 2005.
- *The Present Moment.* Thich Nhat Hahn, 2008.