

# Mindfulness in a Nutshell

Here are the three things you should do when practicing mindfulness:

- **Notice (or Observe)**  
Focus your attention on what you are *seeing, feeling, smelling, hearing, tasting*, and thinking right now. Just notice these experiences.
- **Describe**  
Think silently—without speaking—about what your five senses were just experiencing. For example, “I can see the colors on the fall leaves,” “I smell the cake my mother is baking,” or “I can feel my clothes move against my body as I walk the dog.”
- **Keep doing what you’re doing (or Participate)**  
For example, if you are doing the dishes, keep doing that as you mindfully observe and describe what your five senses—see, hear, touch, smell, taste—are experiencing. So, while doing the dishes, you might focus on the lemon smell of the dish washing liquid, on how the soapy water feels on your hands, or on how you can see your reflection in the clean dish.

Here are three ways to make everything work smoother and better:

- **Focus on facts, not opinions (be Nonjudgmental)**  
When you observe and describe, make sure that you think about the facts of what you are experiencing and not your opinions. For example:
  - Nonjudgmental (facts):** “I see a green, wooden chair with its paint peeling, and I hear a love song playing from a car radio.”
  - Judgmental (opinions):** “I can see an ugly chair, and I hear pretty music playing from a car radio.”
- **Do one thing at a time**  
As much as you can throughout your day, avoid doing two things at once. Do not talk on the phone and drive. Do not eat and watch TV. Do not try to do two chores at once.
- **Really “get into” your current activity (be Effective)**  
When you are doing something, focus on it, engage with it, and do it well. For example, if you are doing the dishes and if your roommate says something nasty to you, focus on the dishes, do not slam them in anger. Instead, wash them well, finish the dishes, and then talk with your roommate about what was said. (This is also an example of doing one thing at a time.)

To start, try mindfulness practice a few times a week for 1 to 2 minutes. Over time, try to practice it daily, and see if you can lengthen the amount of time you practice to be 3 or 4 minutes at a time. Try it while driving, taking a shower, eating a snack, using hand lotion, exercising, or taking a walk. Give it 6 to 9 months before you see a significant change in peacefulness and moods.

*This write-up was inspired by Marsha Linehan and her Dialectical Behavioral Treatment program.*