



Mindfulness - Re-centering - activity -

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The Center of Calm

“There’s a place in yourself of rest... a quiet place... There’s a center out of which you act... that has to be known and held... in the middle of the turmoil... the whirlpool of life conditions. That... is the condition that comes when you are not compelled by desire or by fear or by social commitments. When you hold your center and act out of there.” – Joseph Campbell

When you’re in your Center, you feel calm, alert, and aware. You are being, rather than doing, fully in the present moment. You can sense how everything around you is connected. You feel no tension, resistance, or effort. Even your sense of trying to Center yourself falls away; you can simply be, as you are. You don’t feel positive or negative emotions; you feel calm, balanced, and Centered.

Re-Centering is a Skill

Finding your Center after losing it is a skill anyone can learn. It's common to periodically lose your Center. Distractions, attractions, tensions, desires, and needs frequently demand attention. You can learn to notice when you’re off-Center and how to re-Center. With practice, you can re-Center yourself more and more easily.

Indicators That You’re Off-Center

- being easily distracted, trouble focusing; checking your messages compulsively or reactively.
- frequent multitasking, or taking on too many tasks.
- trouble discerning what's urgent from what's important.
- feeling overwhelmed, stuck, tense, stressed, or fatigued early in the day.
- struggling with laziness or procrastination.
- ending the day feeling depleted; going to sleep too late, or crashing too early.
- trouble remembering what you did yesterday, or even today.
- struggling with impulse control; indulging in sugar, snacks, alcohol, drugs, TV, social media, porn, shopping, etc.
- feeling stuck in negative self-talk; repeatedly needing to bolster self-confidence.
- chronically feeling impoverished, scarcity, or lack.

- obsessively searching for happiness or striving for success.
- being ruled by or reactive to emotions like fear, anger, and shame.
- avoiding the present; holding anxiety or fantasizing about the future; ruminating about the past.
- a fixed mindset or inflexible worldview; disinterest in learning or growing.
- mis-trusting your inner knowing, instincts, or personal truth; over-reliance on gurus, leaders, or authorities.

More Than One Center

Your Center is not limited to one location in your body. It's your inner sense of calm and balance, so it can change depending on your context. Several traditions, including neurobiology, refer to four Centers distributed throughout the body. Each is associated with a different kind of awareness, and can provide helpful information about how individuals relate to the world. Focusing on any of these can help you to re-Center.

Center	Body Location	Kind of Awareness	Carl Jung's Types
Physical	Gut	Kinesthetic	Sensing
Emotional	Heart	Emotional	Feeling
Mental	Brain	Cognitive	Thinking
Psycho-Spiritual	Crown	Psycho-Spiritual	Intuiting

For instance, some traditions use the analogy of 'the guests and the host' to describe the psycho-spiritual Center. Your psyche is likened to a house with several inhabitants. Some are guests – characters, personalities, or roles you have learned to play. These guests can take over the house with their unregulated thoughts and emotions. There is also a host, your observer Self. When the host is absent, the unruly guests start to take over. When the host is present, calm can be restored to the house. Re-Centering is a process of the host regulating the guests, and bringing calm to the house.

Re-Centering Yourself

Because your mind follows your attention, your beliefs can affect how easy it is to re-Center yourself. If you believe it's difficult, or if you believe it's easy, then it will be. The process of re-Centering can be easy, with two simple steps:

1. Notice when you're off-Center.
2. Use a practice for re-Centering that works for you.

Noticing when you're off-Center can be challenging if you come from a society where people typically live off-Center. Take a moment to notice whether you are off-Center right now, and bring your awareness back to the present. One of the benefits of mindfulness practices, like meditation, is training the mind to continue returning to the present. Many meditators are taught, however, to separate their meditation practice from their daily life. To find your Center more regularly, you'd ideally like to access a mindful state anytime you need to. This can help you notice when you're off-Center.

Tips for Practicing

Gentle disclaimer: *It's really ok if these practices don't work for you.* We recognise that for some people e.g. those with post traumatic or chronic stress and/or anxiety may *not* find meditation/ mindfulness beneficial. Experiment and be kind with what you find. Stop if something is not working for you or try something else. If at all in doubt, seek professional advice and support before embarking on a new practice.

Take Notice

Before, during, and after you do any of the following practices, notice your mental, emotional, and physical state. Notice any changes that happen as a result of the practice. Mindfulness practices rely on building awareness and attention like muscles; they typically grow stronger with practice.

Focus on Positive Outcomes

Aim to create positive associations with these practices by focusing on any positive outcomes. During and after the practice, notice if you feel lighter, clearer, calmer, or more energized. It's a common temptation to turn these practices into a chore — something unenjoyable that you 'should do.' This can create resistance for any practice, and contribute to remaining off-Center.

Approach with a Beginner's Mind

Your mind may try to convince you that these practices and the idea of re-Centering have no value. Bringing preconceived notions to these practices is likely to reduce their effectiveness. Especially if they are new for you, try approaching these practices with a beginner's mind. Be open and curious about what might happen.

Experiment

Each time you try a new practice for re-Centering, treat it like an experiment and bring your curiosity. You can be both the scientist observing what happens and the subject experiencing the effects of the experiment. Notice your discoveries. Do you feel more Centered after the experiment? Do you feel any new sensations in your body? Do you feel calmer than when you started? Are you more aware of the present moment?

Be More Playful

Too much seriousness may indicate some internal tension and can be a sign that you're off-Center. Try relaxing and approaching things with a more playful attitude. Add "Whoops!" to your vocabulary. Notice how something could be silly, ridiculous, or absurd.

Practices for Re-Centering

There are many simple practices for re-Centering that don't take much time. Different practices work better under different circumstances. Depending on your context, certain practices may work better for you than others. You may notice the effects of some of these practices quite rapidly. If after a couple of minutes you don't feel any effects, you may need to make an adjustment, or the practice may not be right for you.

Breathing 1

Simply observe the process of your breathing, without trying to change anything. Allow your mind to follow your body's process. Notice the various physical sensations involved.

Breathing 2

Breathe normally from your chest a few times, releasing any tensions. Then start breathing from your belly. Make your breaths deep, slow, and quiet. After 4 such breaths, notice how you feel.

Standing 1

Stand with feet shoulders-width apart, spine straight, eyes closed. With both hands over your navel, imagine your head is floating at the top of your spine. Let your body, from the neck down, become heavier, relaxing and sinking down. Stand for a few minutes; barefoot on the ground for added benefit.

Standing 2

Stand with feet shoulders-width apart, spine straight, eyes closed. Imagine the parts of your upper body (arms, hands, fingers, crown) are the branches of a tree. Your chest, torso, and upper legs are the trunk. Through your feet send roots down into the ground. Stand for a few minutes; barefoot on the ground for added benefit.

Standing 3

Stand with feet shoulders-width apart, spine straight, eyes closed. Imagine a cord extending from the crown of your head pulling you toward the sky, and another from your pelvic floor pulling you down toward the ground, connecting sky and earth. Allow your energy to flow between the two for a few minutes; barefoot on the ground for added benefit.

Focus on Your Feet

Stand or sit comfortably with both feet firmly on the ground. While slowing your breathing, focus your awareness on your feet. Notice the sensations in the soles of your feet. See if this helps you feel calmer. For added benefit, place your bare feet on the ground.

Focus on Your Navel

Focus on the area about two inches below your navel. Breathe naturally for a few minutes. Try combining with a breathing practice, with placing a hand over your navel, or with placing a hand on the crown of your head.

Focus on Your Heart

Focus your attention on the area around your chest and heart. Breathe naturally for a few minutes. Imagine smiling at your heart. While inhaling, say to your heart, "I see you." While exhaling, say to your heart, "Thank you." Try repeating at least five times.

Focus on Your Third Eye

Imagine a straight vertical line running through the center of your body. In an upright seated position, imagine a cord connected to the top of your head, pulling your spine upward. Relax both eyes, half-close your eyelids, and look at the tip of your nose. Focus your attention on your 'Third Eye' in the center of your forehead, a couple of centimeters above your brow. This may feel uncomfortable at first; keep trying until you feel calm.

Focus Above the Crown

Try this to restore calm between your Self (host) and any dramas entertaining your ego (guests). Focus your attention about 15 centimeters above the crown of your head. Relax into the attitude of an observer. Watch your emotions go by, and any thoughts or sensations with them. Continue for as long you're comfortable.

Pyramid Visualisation (adapted from Robert Moore)

A pyramid is a symbol for the archetype of the Sovereign, representing a powerful organizing principle. Imagine a transparent pyramid either in your heart area, or a larger pyramid surrounding your whole body. Focus on the powerful, durable presence of this pyramid. Continue until you feel more Centered.

Mindful Walking

While breathing slowly and steadily, walk forward slowly. Bring your attention to the process of each step. Notice your balance, and how it shifts, as you lift a foot, move it forward, and place it down. Try both heel-to-toe, and toe-to-heel. Continue for a minute or two, or longer. For added benefit, walk in nature.

Write in a Journal

Write about your recent problems, worries, upsets, challenges, or annoyances. Dump it all in your journal. Express your emotions and let them go. You may feel more Centered quickly, or you may need to journal for 20 minutes or longer.

Hand on Your Head

This can help ground your energy, sending excess agitation downward to the Earth. Put one hand on the crown of your head. Maintain your hand's position for about a minute, or until you feel more Centered. Try combining with any of the other practices.



Related Resources

References

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