

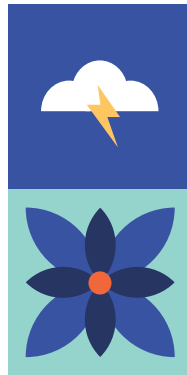
UNIT 2

Be Mindful

Are you feeling stressed or overwhelmed? Need to catch your breath in the midst of a lot of change? Feeling like time just flies by? As a first year college student, you are **not alone** in feeling these ways.

Big Changes in Life Can Often Be Overwhelming.

Your rhythms of studying, working, resting, eating, and everything else may be shifting. It's normal for your attention to get distracted at these times. Perhaps you're thinking about the past or what life was like before starting college? Or about the future, eagerly anticipating or worrying about what's coming next?



We Offer Three “Be Mindful” Tools to Help

Mindfulness involves paying attention, purposefully, to the present moment, with openness and acceptance towards whatever is there. Mindfulness is an approach to meeting life's intensity and change with directness, learning to pay attention to your own habits, notice patterns in how you perceive and organize information, and live with curiosity and openness. These “Be Mindful” tools were selected in collaboration with other CU Boulder students and are grounded in science.

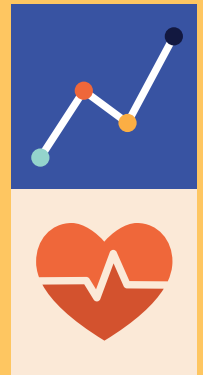
In the Students' Words, These Tools Can Help You To:

- ✓ Take a pause when you're overwhelmed
- ✓ Become aware of the present moment
- ✓ Connect with how you're feeling and your surroundings
- ✓ Enjoy your life rather just being on autopilot



Science Tells Us That Mindfulness Practices Like These Can Improve Your:

- ✓ Resilience to stress
- ✓ Ability to focus and pay attention
- ✓ Emotional and physical wellness
- ✓ Sense of connection to others



Read over the descriptions of the three “Be Mindful” tools on the following pages. Select 1-2 that are of greatest interest to you. Then, a few times this week, **listen to the audio** or **watch the video guide** and practice along. After you practice, **complete the Reflections page.**



Getting Started

You might feel skeptical about some of these tools, wondering how something so simple or brief could have benefits for you. The good news is that these tools were selected with students in mind, are guided by science, and don't require you to do anything different than your usual daily activities. You're already doing daily activities like eating, spending a lot of time sitting in chairs, and breathing. **These tools guide you in doing those same things mindfully.**

The more regularly you practice, the more likely you will be to see benefit.



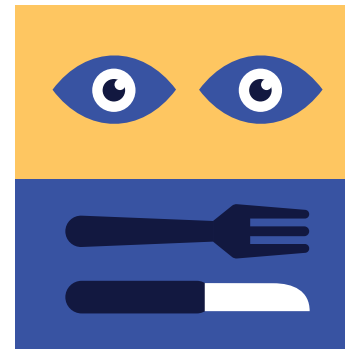
TOOL 1

Mindfulness of Daily Activities

Paying attention to things you do every day is a great way to start, especially activities that we often do on autopilot. For most of us, eating is one of these things. Many of us eat on the go, while doing homework or watching tv, checking our phones, and other activities that pull attention away from actually experiencing our food. Even though the ability to go on autopilot can be useful—like when you need to unlock your phone—it's helpful that you don't have to recall your passcode with effort each time. Being on autopilot also can be a problem, like when you miss out on some really great experiences or some important information because your mind was somewhere else. Mindfulness is an alternative to autopilot.

Mindfulness is an Alternative to Autopilot.

The concept of eating mindfully may be new to you (or even sound a bit strange). The invitation is to give it a try. Even just for a few moments, see what you find by slowing down and paying attention to flavors, textures, aromas, and more. After you've practiced eating mindfully a few times, we've listed some other daily activities. If you like, give these a try this week too, and see what you discover!



In the Look & Listen Section of the Wellness Tools Page, **Launch the Audio Guide For Eating Mindfully.**

A Student's Reflection on This Tool

"A lot of the time when I eat it's just because I'm hungry or bored, or when I'm doing something else like watching a show. Today, however, I ate tacos mindfully. I focused on the practice of tasting. Bringing my full attention to the sensation of flavor helped transform my relationship with food from one that was often on autopilot, to one that emphasized flavor and texture, and the pleasure of eating."

Other Daily Activities to Practice Doing Mindfully

LISTENING TO MUSIC	WALKING TO CLASS	EXERCISING
GETTING INTO BED AT NIGHT	WAKING UP IN THE MORNING	TEXTING
OPENING MY COMPUTER	DOING LAUNDRY	WAITING IN LINE
BRUSHING TEETH	GETTING DRESSED	LOGGING INTO ZOOM



TOOL 2

Stretching Mindfully

You likely have been doing a lot of sitting. Whether you are sitting in a classroom, or sitting on Zoom, there is likely to be a lot of sitting this semester. It's easy to lose awareness of how your body is feeling.



It's easy to get tense without even realizing it.

This mindful stretching practice offers some simple steps to bring awareness to your body and to use movement to feel greater ease. If you like, try it a few times this week when you are doing a lot of sitting.



In the Look & Listen Section of the Wellness Tools Page, **Launch the Video Guide** For Stretching Mindfully.



TOOL 3

Take a 3-Minute Breathing Space

This “Be Mindful” practice can help strengthen the skills of paying attention and coping with challenging times. This practice has been helpful to many students. If you like, give this practice a try this week, and see what you discover!

3 Minutes, 3 Steps

1

Awareness



2

Gathering



3

Expanding





Step 1: Awareness

In this step, you're invited to pay attention to what is in your awareness right now. Perhaps asking yourself: What thoughts are present? What emotions are present? What physical sensations are here right now?

For Thoughts

It can be helpful to imagine thoughts like leaves on a stream. Or imagine yourself watching your thoughts go by like scenes in a movie. You can explore using these images to notice your thoughts.

For Emotions

It can be helpful to name them if they are coming up. Common emotions are joy or happiness, anger or frustration, sadness or feeling down, and fear or being overwhelmed. You can explore using these terms or others to label what you feel.

For Sensations

You might take a sensory survey of: the weight of clothing against your skin, the firmness or softness of the surface underneath you, the presence of tension or stiffness, or the temperature of the air around you. You can explore using this survey of senses.

Whatever you notice is OK.



Step 2: Gathering

In this step, you're invited to let thoughts, emotions, and sensations fade into the background of your awareness. Gently redirect your attention to focus on the physical sensations of the breath at the belly. If it's helpful, you can rest a hand on your belly to help focus your attention. As best you can, gathering your awareness at the belly, follow the breath all the way in and all the way out.

There is nothing else you need to be doing at this moment. Just notice breathing and allow the feelings of the breath to anchor you in the present moment.

Step 3: Expanding

In this step, you're invited to expand your awareness around your breathing. In addition to the feelings of breathing, this includes a sense of the body as a whole in this moment. As you complete this step, bring a more centered and expanded awareness to the next moments of your day.



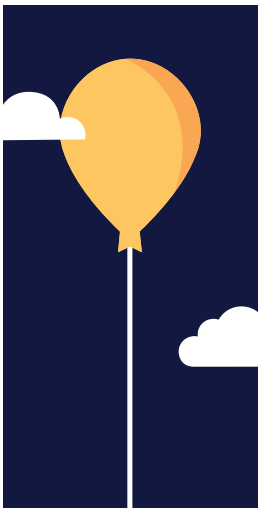
A Shorter Version

If 3-minutes ever feels too long, or 3 steps too complicated, you also can practice with just Step 2, by taking a few mindful breaths. Place your hand on your belly to help anchor your attention. Your mind might be busy, jumping around from thought-to-thought, or emotions might be present.



That's OK.

Gather your attention to focus on the physical sensations of breathing in and breathing out.



If it's helpful, you can imagine a balloon filling with each in-breath and releasing with each out-breath. If it's challenging to pay attention, know you are not alone. Be kind to yourself and know that this is a practice. See what it's like to focus on just one breath, breathing in and out.



In the Look & Listen Section of the Wellness Tools Page, **Launch the Audio Guide** for a 3-Minute Breathing Space.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



What did you notice when doing the mindful eating, chair stretch, or breathing tools?



Did you notice challenges; if so, what did those challenges feel like in your mind and body?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)



How might one of these practices support you this semester?



Are you interested in building one of these practices in your daily life? If so, when?



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