

Mindfulness Worksheet - Cultivating Joy

Joy is a particular type of happiness that's infused with a sense of appreciation, gratitude, contentment and awe. When we're joyful, we lose awareness of self and become fully connected to the present moment. We feel a vitality and aliveness that comes from being in harmony with our true nature.

Contrary to what we might think, joy is always available to us. We don't need any special events or circumstances to occur in order to experience joy. We can find joy in something as simple as full immersion in the experience of our first sip of coffee in the morning.

And yet, we don't frequently do this. It's all too easy for us to take the moments of our lives for granted and to see everything as ordinary, uninteresting and unworthy of our wonder and amazement.

Joy is something that can be practiced and cultivated, and should be. When we intentionally and mindfully invite joy back into our lives, we eventually reach a state in which we no longer have to look for joy, it's just there.

The following meditation and daily activities can help us cultivate a sense of joy.

Meditation to Cultivate Joy

- Sit comfortably in a quiet place
- Set a timer for 4, 8 or 12 minutes
- With your eyes closed, breathe patiently and fully in and out through your nose
- Turn awareness inward towards your breath and your body
- Look upon the breath and the body with wonder and awe
- This body that is breathing itself, the breath that is giving you life
- Recognize how precious each breath is, how extraordinary the body is
- Relax your forehead, and slightly turn up the corners of your mouth
- Feel the reaction in your body
- Rest in the soft, spacious feeling of joy
- When the present moment is stripped of all longing, and stripped of all aversion, joy is what remains
- Identify with joy as if it is your most natural state
- Rest in this present moment, content and aware of the presence of joy until your timer goes off

What Did You Notice?

- Describe your experience with the meditation in general
- What does 'joy' mean to you?
- Do you believe that joy is always available?
- Describe a moment when you felt joy in something that was seemingly very simple
- Were you able to access a sense of joy in the meditation?
- If so, what do you think helped you notice joy?
- Could you feel a shift in your body when you were asked to slightly smile?
- How is joy related to no longer taking anything for granted?
- How is joy related to contentment?
- How is joy related to awe?
- How often do you experience joy in your everyday life?
- Do you think that by becoming more mindful of what joy is, that you'll notice it more often?
- If we can notice joy just by being more mindful, does that mean it's always there, even when we don't see it?
- What does it mean to you when you hear that joy is your true nature?
- List three ways you in which you could make noticing joy a habit

Mindfulness Exercises for Joy

Begin your day with the meditation on joy. As you go about your normal everyday activities, cultivate a present moment awareness and open yourself to the possibility of joy. Each time you notice a feeling of joy, turn towards it for a moment to **intentionally observe your experience**.

If you struggle with noticing moments of joy, **bring more joy to others!** Each day, find one small way in which you can make someone happy. It could be as simple as complementing a friend, taking your dog for a long walk, or calling your mother.

Find joy in nature, in your work, in your mundane daily tasks, and in the moments when there's nothing happening. **Take joy in your own mindfulness** and the fact that you're doing this exercise. Remember that joy is always available.

Review

We often associate happiness with getting and doing the things we like, or successfully avoiding the things we don't. But happiness and joy are available as a foundational state of mind, even if we're doing nothing other than sitting and meditating.

Joy is most available to us when the mind is in a state of ease, and when we've let go of our sense of self.

If you're having trouble feeling joyful, look at everything with fresh eyes, free from judgement. Take in the world around you with a sense of gratitude and awe. Let go of resentments, envy or jealousy, and accept the world as it is right now. Most especially, help others feel joyful and you'll feel it too.