

*10 Simple
MINDFULNESS
Strategies
To Help You
Get Through
Stressful
&
Difficult Times*



About Jackie Massey

Jackie Massey is an entrepreneur, wife, mother, and foster parent to children and adults with special medical needs.

Her life path has taken her through many twists and turns and ups and downs. Throughout her life, she has had to continually evolve and find her new path. She has experienced many things in her life including being a single parent, domestic violence, divorce, financial problems, anxiety and depression, and juggling a career and a blended family, all while living with chronic health issues.



These challenges had forced her to completely change the direction of her life, multiple times, taking a leave of absence from her full-time career, starting a home business while finding a new path, and learning how to cope and live with her new circumstances.

“Living with pain day in, day out, trying to raise a large family and hold down a full-time job out of the house was probably the most difficult time in my life. Then it all came crashing down and I had to learn to live my life in a way I had never planned.” Jackie Massey

Her professional education has continued throughout her life as she is committed to lifelong learning and believes in embracing obstacles as opportunities.

She holds certifications in Applied Counselling with an additional specialization in Addictions, Business Management and Entrepreneurship, as well as Information Management and Technology.

She was a volunteer working crisis phone lines and running a weekly group for women who were working through addictions and trauma in their lives.

Through her pathfinding journey, Jackie has combined her personal experiences and development with her research on self-improvement and has created e-reports, workbooks and courses to help others design and improve their lives.

**COPYRIGHT ©
Self Pathfinder Inc.**

When it feels that your whole life is coming apart at the seams, you may wonder if you will ever be happy again. It can be difficult to believe that this too shall pass and keep the faith that sometimes things must fall apart so that they can be made better - much better. One of the best ways to get through stressful times like this is to begin a mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness is simply the practice of paying attention to this moment on purpose and with kindness and curiosity. Where we all get bogged down and start to feel regret and longing for the past, or worrying about the future, is when our focus is on those two periods of time (past & future), instead of on the here and now. Practicing mindfulness keeps us grounded in the present moment so that we can be truly happy, grateful and peaceful.

Does that sound too good to be true? People have been practicing mindfulness for thousands of years to bring a sense of peace and purpose to their lives. And you can join their ranks by starting right now, this moment.

Take a minute, literally, just one minute, to close your eyes and focus on your breath. Feel the sensations in your body. Notice if your breathing is rapid or slow, shallow or deep. All you need to do is notice - there's no need to do anything about what you discover. For example, if you notice that your shoulders are pulled up close to your ears, you don't need to do anything about that (though you may automatically change your posture). You simply notice.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, the founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction says, "If you are breathing, there's more right with you than wrong with you."

Practicing mindfulness is simple, but it's not easy. This is true because we are a society hooked on always improving. Always striving to do better, be better. All you need to do to see this is to look at the many self-help books available in your local bookstore and on Amazon. We are constantly trying to make ourselves perfect when in fact, we already are - right now in this moment.

So, how do you start a mindfulness practice? Well, if you closed your eyes and did the one-minute exercise recommended above, you've already started. The aim in mindfulness is to bring your mind back, repeatedly, to the present moment and just experience it without judgment. You recognize what is happening in your environment in this moment, and just be with it as it is, without trying to change it.

You may be wondering how this practice could possibly make life easier right now when you feel like you will never get past the worry, fear and grief of what you've lost. There is a whole list of ways practicing mindfulness can help you each and every day, regardless of what you are going through.

1. **Accepting what is** - Whether you like it or not, you need to accept what your life is right now. What other choice do you have? If you continue to struggle against it, it will only increase the pain and cause it to last longer. Mindfulness helps us learn to be with what is, right now in this moment so that we can accept it and move on.
2. **Letting go of the past** - Much of the suffering we experience in life comes from looking back at the past. We long to get back what we had. Or we regret and kick ourselves for the choices we made. Neither of these things will do any good because the past no longer exists. There is nothing we can do to change it. Instead, we can practice living mindfully, which means focusing our attention on the present moment so that we can enjoy the little pleasures in life.
3. **Experience gratitude** - You may have read that and wondered what in the world you had to be grateful for right now. Your life is in shambles and you don't even know where to start to put it back together. But even in the direst circumstances, there are things to be grateful for. It's a beautiful, sunny day. You can hear the birds singing. Today has been easier than yesterday. You enjoyed the food you had today. You have a comfortable, safe place to sleep tonight. When we live in the present moment, we start to notice all the wonderful, delightful things we have in our lives, instead of looking to the future and worrying about what we might or might not have then.

4. **Stay out of thinking mode** - Right now, the last thing we need to do is think. Thinking tends to complicate everything. Inevitably, when we think, we begin living in the past or in the future instead of the present moment. After we have accepted and made peace with the pain and grief, there will be time to think and plan for what we need to do next to rebuild our life. But for now, mindfulness offers us a way to be in the feeling mode more, so that we can accept and let go of what was.

5. **Lowers stress and improves well-being** - It stands to reason that when we aren't thinking about the past or worrying about the future, we feel less stressed. We feel naturally happier and experience an overall well-being that can't be experienced when we are not living in the here and now. Neuroscientist studies have proven over and over again that practicing mindfulness lowers stress and improves our outlook on life.

6. **Develop self-compassion** - One thing we could all use more of is self-compassion. We so easily blame ourselves and judge every little word and action we take. Practicing mindfulness makes us more aware of the fact that we only have this moment to live and that there is no need to blame ourselves or anyone else for what has happened in the past. We find it easier to be kind and gentle with ourselves and to embrace our imperfections because we understand that nothing is perfect.

7. **Let go of fear** - fear comes from not knowing. Not knowing what will happen next. But do we ever truly know what will happen next? No, we don't. We know what our goals are for the future. We make plans and dream about what life will be like. But no one ever really knows what will happen next.

8. **Develop resilience** - Once we accept that we can be okay with what is right now, we begin to develop resilience in the face of adversity. One of the important things that mindfulness teaches us is that all things are impermanent so that you can accept that you don't know what is going to happen next in your life, but you understand that the feeling won't last forever. All things arise and then fall away. In other words, things are always going to "fall apart" at some point. But this gives us hope that what we are experiencing is normal and can be experienced safely and peacefully.

9. **Let go of your attachment to expectations** - One of the biggest reasons for our unhappiness in life is due to all the expectations we have. We expect our lives to be a specific way, and when they aren't we have a challenging time dealing with that. Letting go of these attachments allows us to be happy here and now, no matter what is occurring in our environment. When we can do this, through the practice of mindfulness, we develop equanimity so that we can feel calm and at peace no matter what is going on around us.

10. **Begin responding, not reacting** - Most of our day is reacting to things. We fly off the handle because we are required to stay late at work. We get angry because our co-worker never does his share of the work. We worry about not having enough money to last the month. And on and on it goes. It's exhausting, really. Through practicing mindfulness, we become aware of a choice we have that we probably didn't realize we had. We can choose our response to any situation. We can choose to get angry because we must work late, or we can choose to shrug our shoulders and say, "That's what is right now" and then do it. We might even hum a little tune while we are working because we understand now that we can choose to be happy in any circumstance. This is extremely liberating and empowering! Imagine knowing that when something happens that catches you off guard and the wind shifts you no longer have to be tossed about!

Obviously, practicing mindfulness offers us many benefits during this tough time. It requires only our presence. We don't need to buy into any dogma. We only need to pay attention on purpose. If you'd like to learn more about mindfulness and how it can help you live a happier life, no matter what's going on, check out our website at www.SelfPathfinder.com or the many online blogs or look for Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction courses in your local area.