

# Mindful Work

## Morning and evenings

### Mornings

Starting the day well can set up things to continue well. Don't start in rushing, Doing mode – create a little time for yourself. Use this to stretch, do yoga, meditate or just potter.

So do try to find even five minutes for yourself. Make it as much part of the morning routine as showering and getting breakfast. You might need to get creative about where and how you make the space, like when you get into the car but before you start the engine.

When we first wake, there is a moment of complete innocence; you may find this when away from home and for a moment you don't know where you are. This is a precious experience, before normal life and habitual thinking patterns inhabit our head. Do try to catch this open moment and stay with it, as it illustrates the nature of our baseline mind – open, free and innocent.

Mornings are also also an opportunity to plug in your brain's software for the day. Setting an intention, or making a commitment, first thing in the morning, can be very powerful. It programmes our brains to notice things we might otherwise miss.

So here are my top tips:

1. Catch the very first moment that you wake up, and notice your first breath. At this moment, make being grateful the first thing you do – whether that's waking up safe and warm, having food for breakfast, or simplest of all, just being grateful to be alive.
2. Reflecting on your deepest values, create a simple vow or intentional statement that acts as a commitment. For example 'today I will be kind to myself and others'.
3. Mornings can be a rush. So here's a simple suggestion – get up five minutes earlier. Make this time for you, time just to be, and do what feeds you, whether that's meditating, doing yoga, cuddling the cat, or pottering in the garden.
4. It's a proven fact that being kind makes you happy. Don't take my word for it – find out for yourself. So today, do one kind thing for someone else, and do it early in the day. See how you feel and what happens next. The world needs more kindness, and it starts with you and me.
5. If you manage to create those few minutes for yourself first thing in the morning, whatever else you do, begin with stretching or yoga. Moving the body helps free up the mind.

# Mindful Work

## Evenings

Try to finish the day off well – leaving the stresses of work or home life behind and taking time to refresh and get a good night's sleep.

To relax properly, we need to make a cut off point where we wind down, let go of the day, re-frame in positive aspect whatever has happened and be grateful for the good things.

As with the morning, try to make it a habit to carve out at least 5 minutes for yourself – ideally 20 minutes. Find a quiet space and make sure you will be undisturbed. Do any of the core practices, but in particular I recommend the body scan.

Getting a good sleep is critical to physical and mental health, so see the notes about sleep.

So here are my top tips for the evening:

1. This evening, before you get too tired, take a few minutes to do a body scan. It's a great way to prepare yourself for a good sleep. You can download the short mp3 and notes to guide you.
2. Just before the day ends, take a few moments out to reflect on the good things that have happened today. It's a good idea to write this down and keep a gratitude diary. Make the effort to do this even if it feels like it was a tough day – it's easy to notice and recall difficulties, so re-frame the day in a positive way.
3. Do something new, fun or creative for yourself this evening. Get out of your routine and treat yourself to that new movie, try out that yoga class, run round the park, or call on your neighbour. Get out of the comfort zone and challenge yourself.
4. There's good evidence that the blue light from screens can interfere with sleep cycles, and also by switching off, you may find time for some of the other evening practices we've suggested. This evening, turn off all screens an hour before bed, and that includes switching off your mobile.
5. The final tip is to avoid bad news, violent or disturbing images, or anything that's over-stimulating. Do this for the final hour of the day – and find a better activity like doing some yoga, cooking something for the next day, reading something positive, or just sitting and gazing at the sky.