

Joyful Effort

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts? Heart? Body? None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



When developing mindfulness, we use the practice of meditation to first develop the skill of paying attention in a quiet, controlled setting. Once we achieve some mindful steadiness on our cushions, we can integrate this mindfulness out and about in the world, where distractions are greater and mindfulness can be more of a challenge.

Mindfulness is a skill that must be practiced, with effort, before we can simply be mindful with ease. The type of effort we apply to our mindfulness practice matters. Effort should be skillful, but also joyful. If meditation didn't lead to joy, and if joy was unavailable along the path, why would we ever meditate? Thankfully, meditation can be joyful, even when it's work.

By cultivating joyful effort, or virya in Sanskrit, we approach our meditation cushions with eagerness each day. In the process of bringing attention to the joyfulness of meditation, we're better able to connect to joy as the result of meditation. We practice the goal as the path.

To cultivate joyful effort in your meditation practice, consider the following....

Remember why you are meditating

It's a drag to wake up early every morning and sit on your cushion if you haven't understood the purpose in doing so. When you have clear reasons for meditating, meditation feels less tedious. While everyone has their own personal reasons for mindfulness practice, many people meditate because it brings them happiness, clarity, stability, a feeling of balance, or peace of mind.

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Recall how good you feel when you meditate regularly

Recognizing the potential benefits of meditation is useful, but what about the actual benefits you've received? Recognize what you feel like on the days you meditate, what you feel like on the days you don't, and be mindful of the difference. By remembering how good we feel when we meditate, we're more likely to do it!

Get good at meditation

Meditation feels like effort when we're just beginning to learn how, but the more practiced we become, the more we're able to meditate with ease. Getting good at meditation, makes us more likely to feel joyful in our effort. Who doesn't love to do something they are good at?

Try the following meditation on joyful effort, and then answer the questions below to further integrate your experience.

MEDITATION ON JOYFUL EFFORT

- Sit comfortably in a quiet place
- Close your eyes, and turn your attention inward
- Breathe slowly and steadily in and out through your nose
- Contemplate why you are meditating
- What benefits do you hope to receive?
- Spend as much time on this topic as you'd like
- Then recognize, and contemplate, all the benefits you've already received
- Recall how good you feel on the days you meditate, compared to how you feel on the days you do not
- Spend as much time as you'd like on this topic
- Then recognize the benefits you're receiving right now
- Silently name all the positive qualities you feel in your mind right here and right now
- Note that these positive qualities are not appearing accidentally, they are the result of your effort
- Take note of the effort that you're applying to your meditation right here and right now
- Rejoice in that effort and rest in awareness of the benefits you're receiving
- Until you're ready to open your eyes

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WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Describe your experience with the meditation in general

What are your personal reasons for practicing mindfulness?

In what ways do you hope to benefit from becoming more mindful?

Do you think it's of benefit to practice mindfulness in a seated meditation?

Why do you think it might be of benefit to meditate first thing in the morning?

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Do you notice a difference in mood, attitude, or energy between the days when you meditate, and days that you don't?



Have you ever felt frustrated with the effort required to learn something?

How do you think that frustration affected your progress?

Have you ever wanted to learn something so badly, that you practiced joyfully every day?

What do you think it would look like, or feel like, to approach the effort of meditation joyfully?

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Since you've begun practicing mindfulness in earnest, have you become more joyful?

What are some of the benefits you've received by practicing mindfulness?

What do you think it would look like, or feel like, to be good at mindfulness meditation?

How have you been integrating the benefits of meditation into the rest of your day?

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REVIEW

Mindfulness reveals joy as we become less attached to distraction, and remain present instead. Joy is the result of mindfulness and meditation.

The practice of mindfulness also requires us to apply joy. If meditation was all work and no fun, why would we ever do it?

So if joy is the result, but we need joy in order to begin, what does that say about joy? This paradox reminds us that joy is not something we “get” from mindfulness and meditation, but rather, something that is revealed.

Joy is already present within us, and in abundant supply. Because joy is who we are, we’re able to tap into joy to kick start our meditation practice. And when we finally get good at meditating? Joy is what we’re left with.

