



S E P T E M B E R 2 0 1 9

# C A R E P A C K A G E



Discover the vibe of life



# CARE PACKAGE

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## THEME WEEK BLOG

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and share practices related to this  
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Short form mindfulness practices to prepare  
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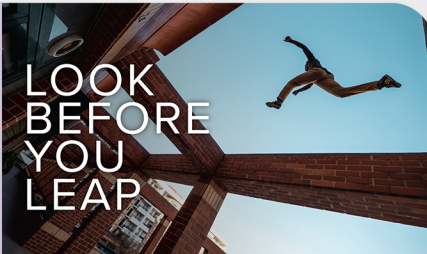
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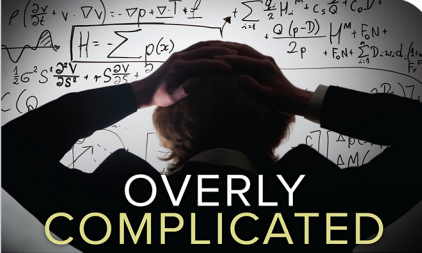
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# How Mindfulness Helps us Break Bad Habits and Become Less Reactive

By eM Life Instructor Kelly Barron

There's an old joke I once heard about a woman who slices the end off a pot roast before she puts it in the oven. One day, her daughter asks her why she always does this.

"That's the way my mother always did it," the woman responds.

The curious daughter then calls her grandmother to ask her why she cuts the end off the pot roast. Her grandmother replies: "That's the way my mother always did it."

The still curious daughter then calls her great grandmother to ask her why she cuts the end off the pot roast. The great grandmother replies: "That's the only way the roast fit in the pan."

The joke is one way of telling us that we're creatures of habit. In fact, we go through much of our day on autopilot, reacting to situations and circumstances out of force of habits that sometimes get passed down through generations like you're a pot roast recipe.

## The Science of Habits and Our Autopilot Tendencies

Social scientists say as much as 40 percent of our behavior is habitual.

Some of our automaticity is hardwired to protect us. It takes just 50 milliseconds, for example, for our brains to determine if a person's facial expression is trustworthy.

That kind of automatic reaction comes in handy when we find ourselves on a dimly lit street at late at night. So, does knowing how to brush our teeth, drive a car or send a text without having to consciously relearn each of those tasks before engaging in them.

Habits guide us seamlessly through our day. And our environment is loaded with cues that trigger our reflexive behavior. When we get into the car we put on our seatbelt, for example. After going to the bathroom, we wash our hands.

From the standpoint of the brain, this is neurologically efficient. Once we learn something, our brain automates it so we can be free to focus on more important things.

But living on autopilot and being reactive can also get us into a lot of trouble – particularly with mental and emotional habits that operate out of our awareness. In other words, we do more than just habitually cut the end off pot roasts or put on our seatbelts throughout the day.

Maybe, for example, your Dad had a quick temper and because this was modeled for you, you've developed a habit of getting upset when you're cut off in traffic or your kids don't do their homework. Maybe when you're sad you automatically reach into the freezer for a pint of Ben and Jerry's Salted Caramel ice cream. Or perhaps being perfect is so important to you that before every work presentation you're beset with crippling anxiety.

## Use Mindfulness to Break Habits

Of course, not all automatic reactions or mental and emotional habits are bad.

But if we're not mindful of them our reactivity and habitual tendencies can be jet fuel for stress and suffering. This is one of the reasons why mindfulness – the practice of paying attention to the present moment with non-judgmental awareness – is so helpful in reducing stress.

When we're mindful, we can begin to see the circumstances and situations that cue our habitual tendencies more clearly. We can notice how psychological patterns play out and create stress. And as we create more and more awareness through the practice of mindfulness, we can weaken habits that no longer serve us and learn to strengthen ones that do.

All of this is incredibly empowering. We're rarely in control of what happens to us. But through the power of mindfulness we can learn to respond rather than automatically react to the circumstances of our lives, reducing our stress in the process. In the end, having the choice of whether to engage in a habit or not is wonderfully freeing whether it involves pot roast or handling a morning commute with more ease.

## Try This Mindfulness Technique to Break Bad Habits and Triggers

Here's a simple practice to help you notice when a

habit has been triggered and transform an automatic reaction into a response.

## STOP (Stop, Take a Breath, Observe and Proceed) Practice:

This on-the-spot mindfulness practice can often be the difference between engaging in habits that are harmful and choosing behavior that's helpful to you and others. Follow the steps below to help you break a bad habit and become more responsive rather than reactive.

**Stop:** So much of mindfulness is about simply stopping whatever it is you're doing and bringing your full awareness into the moment. Whenever you feel triggered or you feel an impulse to automatically play out a mental or emotional habit, simply stop.

**Take a Breath:** Bring your attention into your body, and take a soothing breath in, elongating the exhalation.

**Observe:** Notice what's happening inside of you and outside of you. Do you feel tension in your face, shoulders or belly? Are you aware of any thoughts or emotions? Do you have an idea of what trigger might be cueing a habitual behavior?

**Proceed:** Once you feel a bit more settled, step into the next moment with awareness, choosing whatever it is you want to do next with a bit more wisdom and kindness.

## About the Author

Kelly Barron, M.A., is a certified mindfulness facilitator, at UCLA and writer. She teaches mindfulness for UCLA's Mindfulness Research Center as well as for corporations, schools and private groups. Kelly has worked as a mindfulness teacher with eM Life since 2016. She came to learn the value of mindfulness as a deadline-driven journalist. Now, she's passionate about sharing mindfulness with others to help them live with more ease, clarity and joy. You can learn more about Kelly and read her blog at [www.kellybarron.com](http://www.kellybarron.com).





# SEPTEMBER

## MINDFULNESS

# ARTICLES



These articles from other publications support our monthly mindfulness topic –  
**RELAXATION TECHNIQUES**

### RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Quick Read (3 min)

**A 6 Minute  
Mindfulness Practice  
to Relax and Retune  
after a Hectic Day**

[CLICK TO READ](#)

Quick Read (7 min)

**Relaxation  
Techniques You Can  
Practice Anywhere**

[CLICK TO READ](#)

Longer Read (13 min)

**Relaxation  
Techniques for  
Stress Relief**

[CLICK TO READ](#)

### TIPS FOR RELAXATION

Quick Read (5 min)

**10 Ways to Relax in  
Nature and Stress  
Less**

[CLICK TO READ](#)

Longer Read (13 min)

**Two Quick Breathing  
Practices to Calm Your  
Racing Thoughts**

[CLICK TO READ](#)

Longer Read (4 hours)

**4 Hours of Long  
Ambient Music**

[CLICK TO READ](#)



RESILIENCE

## Breaking Free from Bad Habits



### REGISTRATION INFORMATION

*Date and Time:*

September 11th 1:00 pm EDT

September 26th 3:00 pm EDT

ENROLLMENT IS LIMITED. Sessions fill up quickly. Register now in your company eMindful portal.

Over time we've developed certain habits to get away from stress that can be defined as "bad habits". These are habits that take us further away from what's most important, and eventually lead to greater stress. Freedom from these bad habits involves a greater understanding of the cravings and urges that are associated with them. In this session, we will explore how our unhelpful habits are generated and how we can begin to intervene.

### COMING IN OCTOBER

#### Resilience

Creating Better  
Relationships at Work

Please contact Support at  
**support@emindful.com**  
or **1-855-211-1536** with  
any questions.



MINDFUL EATING

## Surfing the Urges to Overeat



### REGISTRATION INFORMATION

*Date and Time:*

September 12th 2:00 pm EST

September 27th 1:00 pm EST

ENROLLMENT IS LIMITED. Sessions fill up quickly. Register now in your company **eM Life portal**.

Many of us experience urges to eat when we are not physically hungry or when we are past fullness, perhaps to manage our emotions or avoid dealing with stress that is a part of life. In this session, you will learn how to identify and eat according to physical hunger and fullness, as well as how this can help improve your quality of life.

### COMING IN OCTOBER Mindful Eating

Overcoming Obstacles  
to Weight Loss

Please contact Support at  
**support@emindful.com**  
or **1-855-211-1536** with  
any questions.



# MINDFUL MEETING MOMENT

Choose your desired length of Mindful Meeting Moments- short form mindfulness practices that can prepare your team to be more present, more focused, and more effective for the meeting ahead. So settle in, straighten your spine, and follow along.

**1 MINUTE**

[CLICK TO LISTEN](#)

**3 MINUTES**

[CLICK TO LISTEN](#)

**5 MINUTES**

[CLICK TO LISTEN](#)





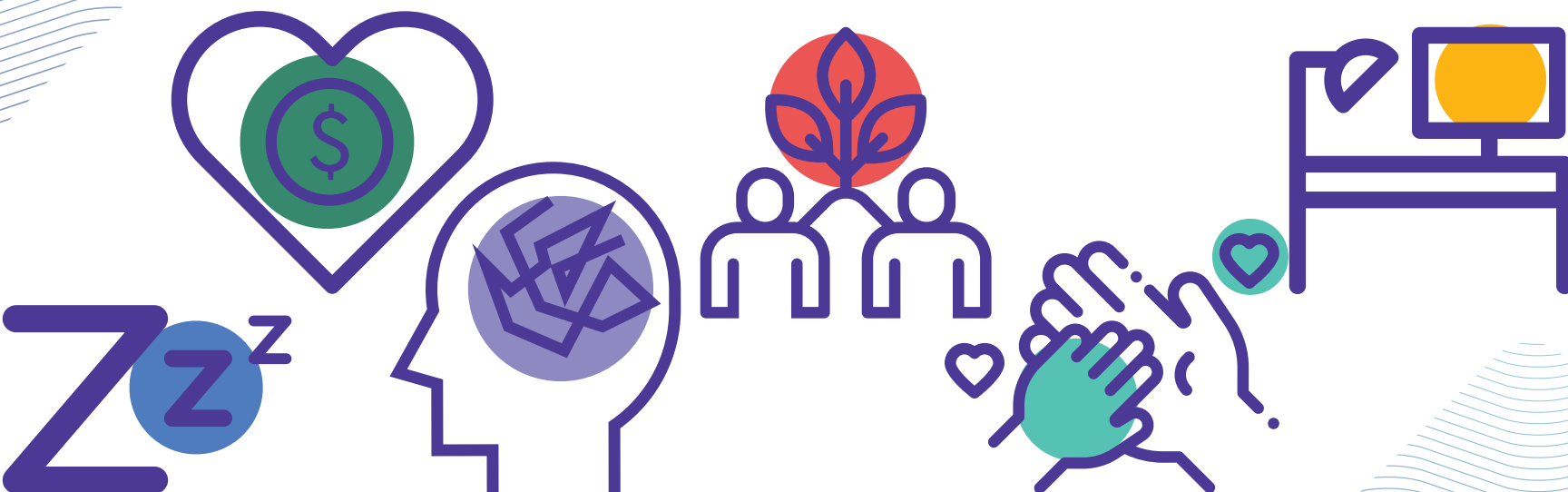
# THE MINDFUL DAILY

PRACTICE GUIDE | VOL 3

a handy pocket guide to

SLEEP, FINANCIAL STRESS, ANXIETY,

RELATIONSHIPS, PARENTING, WORKPLACE STRESS



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# A Transformational Practice

## SLEEP

Focus attention on the sensations of the body and breath to settle the mind and relax the body. Bring to mind a happy place or a short phrase that brings you calm and ease.

A blue circle containing the text 'Zzzz' in white, representing sleep.

## WORKPLACE STRESS

Each time you begin a new task, take one minute to bring your full attention to the breath. Notice what this experience is like for you.



## FINANCIAL STRESS

When you feel the urge to make a purchase, pause and take a few breaths. Ask yourself if this will help you reach your goals and/or if you really need the item.



## PARENTING

Approach situations from an attitude of curiosity. Start with a few conscious breaths and ask yourself what the situation would look like through a child's eyes?



## ANXIETY

Pause and take 10 conscious breaths. Ask yourself how are you feeling; is what you're thinking, really true? Respond in a way that will best serve you.



## RELATIONSHIPS

What does the other person need from you; to be heard, understood, feel like they matter?  
What do you need?



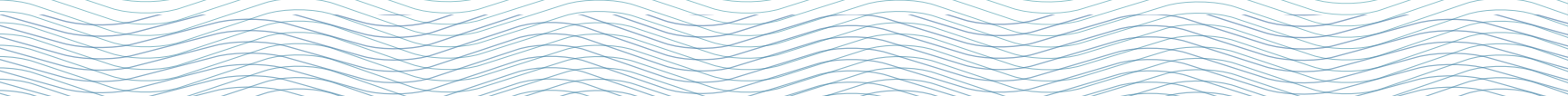
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# A Transformational Practice

Establishing a regular mindfulness practice can be transformational in every aspect of your life – ranging from your performance at work, your connections with others, stress, health and wellbeing, and even your spending habits. Mindfulness helps us to be more present more of the time, and to have greater clarity about what’s happening in our inner world of thoughts and emotions, and the world outside of us. This visibility into our in-the-moment thinking and feeling gives us the ability to make choices that will move us in the direction of our life dreams, goals and values.

## **Mindfulness In Daily Life**

Mindfulness can be practiced both formally and informally. When you sit down to meditate, we call that the formal practice. The formal practice helps you create a foundation of mindfulness that enables you to bring your mindfulness skills into everyday life activities, like having a conversation, preparing dinner, responding to emails, or even as you go to sleep. This Practice Guide will give you practical tips for integrating both formal and informal mindfulness practices in your life: Sleep, Financial Stress, Relationships, Anxiety, Parenting, and Purpose.





## SLEEP

The message on sleep is clear. We need about 7-9 hours of sleep each night to function at our best. But missing out on the amount and quality of sleep needed is common. Whether you have difficulty falling asleep when your head first hits the pillow, or you wake up and can't get back to sleep, mindfulness can help. And it's normal to take up to 30 minutes to fall asleep, so why not spend a few minutes practicing mindfulness to ease into it.



## Wind the mind down for sleep

On the nights your mind starts racing the moment your head hits the pillow, try settling the mind and body to create the conditions for a good night's rest.

- Get comfortably into bed, set all distractions aside, and when you're ready close your eyes.
- Thank your mind for working hard today and now it's time for the mind to rest.
- Settle the mind by shifting your attention away from thinking and to the general feeling of your body lying in bed – feeling the weight and texture of sheets or covers on your skin, the pressure of your body resting on the mattress, your head on the pillow.
- Starting with your feet and moving up through the body, bring a relaxed attention to the sensations of each part of the body. First noticing the feet touching sheets, the pressure of feet to mattress, warmth or coolness. And then moving attention to the ankles and so on.
- Keep the attention relaxed enough that you can drift off at any time.



## Waking up in the middle of the night

While middle of the night wakeups aren't ideal, we can actually make it harder to get back to sleep by engaging in anxious or frustrated thinking. Instead, take a few moments to help your mind and body relax so you can more easily fall back asleep.

**Step 1:** When you wake up in the middle of the night, do a mindful check-in. What are your thoughts? Your emotions? Are you anxious or frustrated? Is there any tension in your body?

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**Step 2:** Invite your body to release any tension or tightness. Is there a particular place that you feel it? If so, imagine the soothing energy of the breath moving into that area and inviting that part of the body to soften and relax as much as it will.

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**Step 3:** Coordinate your breath with a comforting phrase to help set your mind at ease. On the inhale you can say to yourself, "Breathing in calm and ease". As you exhale say, "Breathing out relaxing more deeply." Use any phrase that's meaningful to you.

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**Step 4:** Even if it takes a while to fall back asleep, this practice will help you feel more peaceful and relaxed while you rest.





# FINANCIAL STRESS

Many people have a stressful relationship with their finances. Worries about not having enough and uncertainty about how to manage finances more effectively can lead to overwhelm and avoiding taking stock and making important financial decisions. Practice these mindfulness tips to get clear about your financial goals, your relationship with money, and maybe to even have a little more in the bank.



FINANCIAL  
STRESS

## Prevent buyer's remorse with a mindful pause

We can purchase almost anything with a touch of a button or swipe of a card, impulsively and instantaneously, which doesn't give time to consider whether we truly want the item, or if it serves our financial goals.

- Before you buy, STOP for 1 minute!
- Take a few deeper breaths as you relax your belly. The compulsion to buy can be intense, so breathe your way to being calmer and give yourself a little distance to any feelings of anticipation or urgency to buy.
- Observe what's compelling you to make this purchase. What are your thoughts? What's your mood? Are you hoping this will bring you happiness?
- Will this purchase bring you closer to what you truly want and need? Will it cause you more financial stress? Will you be just as happy, fulfilled and cared for without the purchase?
- Proceed – As you move forward to making or not making the purchase, do so consciously, with clarity and alignment to your longer-term financial goals.



# ANXIETY

Anxiety is a natural emotion that helps us predict what might go terribly wrong so we can avoid those situations. But anxiety creates havoc when we develop a habit of overestimating the risk of things that may not even happen in the future, and underestimate our ability to handle them. It's not possible to completely get rid of anxiety, nor would that be desirable for our safety. But mindfulness can help us to develop a healthy relationship to anxiety.



## ANXIETY

**Practice these steps to remain steady and resourceful, instead of getting carried away by anxious thoughts and feelings.**

### **Count**

Give your mind a break from anxious thoughts by counting your next 10 breaths. This will help your mind and body calm down, putting you in a better position to respond effectively.

---

### **Check in**

Check in with what's really happening right now. Are you ok in this moment? Are you getting caught up in worries that may never come true? What are the actual facts of the situation? Is it possible you're over-estimating the risks? What do you know about your ability to handle whatever does happen?

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### **Choose**

Choose a response that truly serves you, and doesn't make anxious thoughts and feelings worse. Based on the facts of the situation and your resourcefulness, how can you respond to anxious thoughts and feelings more effectively now?



# RELATIONSHIPS

Having good relationships is one of, if not the, biggest predictor of happiness and health. But, successful relationships take work. Mindfulness can help us strengthen our personal and professional relationships by developing greater empathy and becoming more interested in understanding others instead of overly-focusing on being understood.





## RELATIONSHIPS

### It Takes Two to Tango

When you get caught up in the blame game, you can actually undermine your ability to resolve the situation because it prevents productive problem-solving. When you find yourself blaming, give this mindfulness empathy practice a try.

- Drop the story about how the other person is to blame.
- Explore other possibilities for perceiving the situation – just for a moment. What might the situation look like from the other person’s vantage point? What might they be feeling?
- Now, become curious about what’s underneath your reaction of blame. Are you feeling unappreciated, hurt or betrayed? Become aware of your feelings – anxious, angry, sad...
- With your broader awareness, what’s most important for creating the conditions for health and happiness in this relationship moving forward?



## RELATIONSHIPS

### I See What You Mean

Not feeling truly understood can easily create relationship tension and disconnection. If you're desiring greater understanding from others, start by understanding others with this mindful listening practice.

- Set an intention to be deeply curious about the person you're communicating with, and to not share your own perspectives or needs for the next few minutes.
- Pause for a few seconds to become present before directing your openness and curiosity toward the other person.
- Ask the other person something that you'd like to understand about them. This could be something as simple as what the best part of their day has been, or something deeper like how they are feeling about a point of tension in your relationship.
- Just listen with the intention to truly understand them, letting go of any need to share your own experience for now.
- Notice what it's like to give yourself permission to be interested and open to the other person, without trying to change the other person or be understood.



# PARENTING

Parents often say that their children are wonderful mindfulness teachers. They remind us about the joy of childlike curiosity, slowing down, and being fully present with the ones we love. And they also can push our buttons and send us into an emotional tailspin. Mindfulness can help you be more present, patient, and resilient so you experience more joyful parenting.



## Childlike Curiosity

Children are naturally curious, and inclined to ask why and explore as they push boundaries to see what will happen. As adults, we can lose our curiosity by assuming we already know what a person, situation, or experience is like – resulting in our being less present in everyday moments.

- Experience more connection and joy by spending a few minutes bringing a childlike curiosity to an everyday situation. This could be something you do alone, like brushing your teeth. Or it could be something you do with your child, like eating dinner. Imagine you're experiencing this for the first time. Ask yourself these questions and notice the impact of curiosity.

What's it like?

What's interesting about this experience?

What are you becoming aware of that you haven't noticed before?

How is it to be fully present and interested in this moment?

How is your curiosity influencing your experience?

Whether you're experiencing more connection or joy, or noticing you'd rather be doing something else, take note of the value of curiosity in your day.



### Patience

It takes children more time to get dressed, eat breakfast, walk to the car.... If we haven't budgeted enough time for them to do things, it's easy to see them as the reason we're running late and feeling stressed. But it may be more accurate to say that we're the reason they are feeling rushed and stressed. The next time you want your child to move faster, support each other with patience!

**How could slowing down right now help you move faster, or accept the moment just as it is, with greater ease and joy?**

- Give yourself permission to slow your mind and body down.
- Notice how impatience feels in your body (tension, clenching, heart racing) and your mind (worries about being late, wishing something would or wouldn't happen).
- Invite any tension to release by taking a few deeper breaths.
- Ask yourself if your impatience is really helping you or your child right now? Will your impatience help either of you to feel more calm, competent, or connected?



# WORKPLACE STRESS

When it comes to success in our personal and professional lives, we only have so much we can do, be and give. And sometimes our pursuit of success causes stress and anxiety. Mindfulness can help us diffuse workplace stress with an attitude of gratitude, and by being more connected to our purpose for the work we do.





## Clarify Your Purpose

Purpose is a way of living, not an end goal. It can be about the way you relate to others, the qualities you want to embody, and the daily work of your life. Take a few moments before jumping into work to connect to your purpose to feel more inspired, creative, resourceful and resilient in your work.

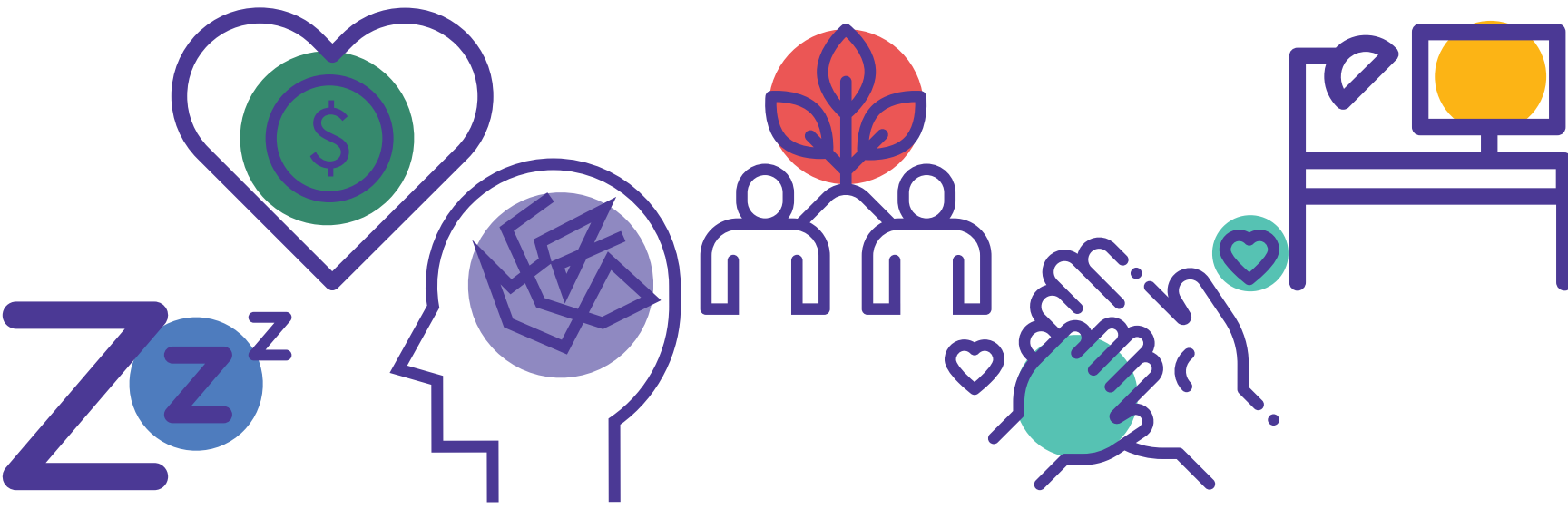
- Pause the doing and unbusy your mind by tuning into your body. Notice your energy, temperature, restlessness or stillness...
- Purpose is often experienced as a deeper level of knowing, or wisdom that can more easily be connected to as you settle the mind and body. Continue to rest your awareness in the body for a few moments.
- When you're ready, ask yourself: What is meaningful to you? What are the values you want to bring into the world? What is the difference you want to make or the way you want to be with others in the world? What seems clear, or is perhaps emerging, about your purpose in this moment?
- Notice how becoming more clear and connected to a sense of purpose influences your experience of the workday.



## Gratitude Practice

Cultivating gratitude has been shown to help overcome the brain's tendency to focus on the negative, and under appreciate the positive aspects of our day, work, and life. Gratitude helps us rebalance our perspective by intentionally appreciating where we work, who we work with, and the work we get to do. Give yourself this daily gratitude challenge and notice how it shifts your perspective.

- Take a few minutes each day to reflect on one or two things you are grateful about.
- If you're having a hard time thinking of things you're grateful for, look for the smaller and simpler things. You might feel grateful when someone reminds you of a resource you could use to make your job easier, or for bringing you a cup of coffee to your morning meeting.
- Spend about 1 minute taking in the experience of being grateful for each thing, experience or person that you're feeling grateful for.
- Notice how it feels as you recall what you're grateful for and how gratitude influences your day.



[www.eMindful.com](http://www.eMindful.com)