

PHIL220: PHILOSOPHY OF HAPPINESS BEGIN YOUR MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE

In our unit on Buddhism & Suffering, we will be discussing the role of meditation in a happy life. For those who have not practiced mindful meditation before, it takes time and discipline to gain insights through the practice. In order for us to get anything out of it, we need to put in some practice, so we'll be using this [28-day mindfulness challenge](#) to guide our exploration of mindfulness meditation. I hope (and believe!) that you will find this to be rewarding (or, at the very worst, just a tad boring). I have assigned these exercises to students in the past and they almost all reported finding it valuable. Many of them reported that they would continue meditating after the class ended.

As such, **full participation in the course requires that you put a good faith effort into these exercises.** You won't be graded on your meditation per se, but you will be graded on effort and thoughtfulness in your mindfulness reflection assignment (due on [date], about 5 weeks from now).

How to approach your 28-day mindfulness challenge:

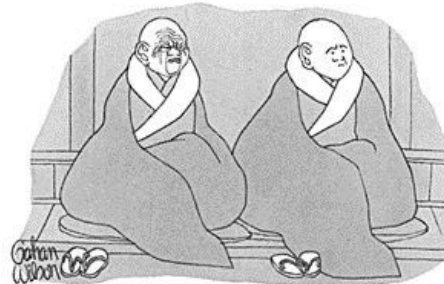
- *Make a plan.* You are far more likely to stick to meditating if you pick a specific time of day when you will complete the exercises. You might try meditating right after waking up, right after breakfast, right after lunch, as part of your nighttime routine, etc. Plan to associate this time of day with a few quiet moments to yourself. Notice that you'll be asked to complete 5 exercises per week (so you can miss an average of 2 days per week and stay on track). Each exercise is about 7 minutes long.
- *Find your space.* Is there a place in your home where you can typically be free of distractions? If not, is there a place at work, during your commute, or in your neighborhood where you can be free of distractions? Think of places where you will feel comfortable sitting quietly, closing your eyes, and not worrying about people around you.
- *Get comfortable.* Some meditation coaches encourage sitting up straight or adopting a specific posture while meditating. While it's true that many people find it easier to focus on the exercise while they are upright, you should find what works for your body. This means accommodating any aches, pains, or quirks of your body. I tend to prefer reclining or lying down while meditating (but be careful of doing this when you're too tired... high risk of snoozing). You might also try walking while meditating if that's something available/comfortable for you (some of the later exercises will ask you to try this).
- *Be flexible.* While adopting a routine is the best way to stick with a meditation plan, be flexible if you notice your plan isn't working for you. For instance, do you keep facing interruptions when you meditate while your siblings are home? Do you tend to fall asleep while meditating right before bed? Are you finding it uncomfortable to meditate while sitting upright? If things like this crop up, don't hesitate to adjust your plan.
- *Read through the meditation reflection assignment now.* That way you'll have a sense of what you're expected to gain out of the exercises and how to succeed in the graded part.

Tips:

- Approach these exercises as a rare opportunity to take some time entirely to yourself. If you have a busy or stressful life, this is your excuse to take daily breaks from it.
- That being said, don't be discouraged if you find meditation frustrating or dreadfully boring during the first several days (or even weeks). This is totally normal. Furthermore, don't be worried about only having complaints to report in your meditation reflection. The main idea is to give meditation an honest try and be thoughtful about its relationship to the ideas in the course.
- If you find it difficult to complete the exercises because of distractions at home (for instance, child/eldercare responsibilities, personal difficulties at home, work-related responsibilities), I ask that you make a good faith effort to carve out time to complete the exercises. However, if you genuinely find that they present insurmountable difficulties, be honest about this in your reflection. I will not deduct points if you have been unable to meditate because of your crying infant! Get through as many of the exercises as you can.
- Reach out to me at any time if you have questions about how to approach the assignment or if you're worried about getting through it.



"As far as I can tell, meditation is just worrying minus the content."



"Nothing happens next. This is it."

Happy meditating!