



Real-World Mindfulness™:
101 Eyes-Wide-Open Ways to
Boost Awareness and Creativity

by Maya Frost

About Maya

Clarity. Comfort. Comic Relief.

Maya Frost calls herself a **mind masseuse**. That's because she loves the way it sounds and the picture it conjures of someone lovingly massaging, soothing, stretching and invigorating the mind.

You see, she doesn't take herself too seriously, but she DOES take her work seriously.

And her work is playing with mindfulness. She teaches eyes-wide-open ways to get calm, clear and creative.

Maya has taught thousands of people how to pay attention. Trained in conflict resolution and mediation, with a B.S. in psychology and Asian Studies, certification in mind/body fitness, a 30-year meditation practice and a passion for neuroscience, she has been a writer, teacher and facilitator since 1983. She is wildly enthusiastic about helping people maximize their formidable frontal lobes, and she uses a surprising blend of playfulness, compassion, neuroscience and education theory to teach others how to make mindfulness an unavoidable part of every day.

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Author's Note—How To Use This Ebook

Mindful friend,

There are many ways to develop mindfulness, and meditation is but one of them!

If you are looking for some creative ideas to enliven your own mindfulness path, you've come to the right place. This ebook is packed with over 100 tips and exercises to inspire you to see opportunities for mindfulness in everything you do.

I've divided the list into **eight sections** representing the eight multiple intelligences first discussed by Howard Gardner of Harvard University decades ago and now considered to be the foundation for an enlightened approach to lifelong learning.

There's no need to define yourself as a certain kind of learner. Instead, I invite you to consider the fact that **you have the potential to develop your intelligence in ALL EIGHT AREAS.**

You can read this list from start to finish, or pick the sections that naturally attract you and read those first. A very important part of mindfulness is **recognizing your tendency to go in a certain direction**, but just as important is **cultivating an interest in exploring other areas of learning**. With this ebook, you can do both.

I don't believe it's necessary to print this ebook. (I'm mindful of using resources and avoid printing things myself whenever possible!) Instead, I suggest that you read it through, and then randomly select a couple of pages to print. Decide that you will try the ideas from those pages for a while, no matter what.

This turns the whole process into a **game** in which you never really know what your next assignment will be! It also guarantees that you will spend time focusing on a few tips that might not be in your particular comfort zone. That's what makes this such a unique learning opportunity!

There are **web links** scattered throughout this ebook, and I encourage you to explore them at your leisure. However, the easiest way to check out the numerous resources I recommend is to simply visit my website and go to the Free Stuff page at <http://www.Real-WorldMindfulness.com/free-stuff.htm>

I've got all kinds of things listed there!

Most of all, have fun! Mindfulness is *the very essence* of fun, so if you're having a good time, you're doing exactly what is right for you.

Enjoy!

Warmly,

Maya

Maya Frost
"The Mind Masseuse"
Real-World Mindfulness Training™

**Do you have a creative and collaborative idea for using this material?
Contact me at Maya@MassageYourMind.com and let's play with the possibilities!**

Introduction to Mindfulness and Multiple Intelligences

Of all the definitions of mindfulness, here's my favorite: paying attention.

I love the simplicity of it. We've been told to pay attention since we were small tots, and the meaning is clear to us today.

But I'm the first to admit that this doesn't tell the whole story about mindfulness. "Paying attention" suggests a focused awareness, but it offers no hints about the subject, action, intention, timeliness or purpose of our concentration.

We could turn to the Buddhist concept of mindfulness—nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment—but there are plenty of folks who don't find that definition particularly compelling.

That's a shame, because really, mindfulness is ALL about fun. Sure, developing greater awareness can be utterly transformative and remarkably powerful, but that doesn't mean it has to be so **serious**. We want to make sure to include the element of **wonder** as well as joy, humor and surprise.

By focusing on what appears to many as the joyless act of sitting still in silent contemplation, we are doing a disservice to the whole concept of mindfulness. Although we can certainly enhance our awareness and understanding of all that is going on within and around us by meditating, it is not the only way for us to experience greater mindfulness.

Instead of being attached to the idea of meditation as the only vehicle that will take us to us to that great state of mindfulness, we should recognize the various routes and vehicles available and reconnect to the fact that we were BORN mindful!

Even as infants, we were captivated by light, sound, color and texture. We were particularly cued in to our physical sensations. In fact, our role as babies—namely, playing and exploring the world—created in us a sense of wonder and joy. That is the purest form of mindfulness.

There are plenty of artists, athletes, entrepreneurs, pet-lovers, poets, symphony conductors, and community leaders who have never meditated for an hour in their entire lives. And yet, they are fully present

and engaged in the world and have developed a heightened sense of awareness that serves them exceedingly well in their work and their personal relationships.

We have come to view meditation as the only way to create the stillness needed to “step back” from our thoughts and sensations enough to see them clearly.

The reality is that **stillness is not what we need most**. What we’re really looking for is **clarity**, and many people are actually more likely to develop that when they are **moving**.

We enjoy noticing new things. We have a good time learning about what interests us. We love being “in the moment” because that is when we feel truly connected to the world and the deepest part of ourselves.

I’m a neuroscience nerd as well as a 30-year student of meditation, and so the definition of mindfulness that sparkles brightly for me is the one offered by **Dr. Ellen Langer**, a Harvard psychology professor who has done a great deal of research in this area. You could even say she “wrote the book” on mindfulness, titled (not surprisingly!) **Mindfulness**. Dr. Langer has also written a particularly helpful book called **The Power of Mindful Learning**, and more recently, she published the delightful and inspiring **On Becoming An Artist: Reinventing yourself Through Mindful Creativity**.

Through her research, Dr. Langer has developed a very clear description of mindfulness, and in this ebook, we’re going to lovingly and creatively apply this same description to a variety of activities.

According to Dr. Langer, mindfulness revolves around certain psychological states, including:

- 1) openness to novelty
- 2) alertness to distinction
- 3) sensitivity to different contexts
- 4) awareness of multiple perspectives
- 5) orientation in the present

Just for fun, let’s simplify these notions even further. For our purposes, mindfulness involves:

▲ **noticing new things**

▲ **seeing similarities and differences**

▲ **being flexible enough to view the world in new ways and from different perspectives**

▲ **being fully present**

Now, let's go back to the idea of being **a mindful infant**. Consider the experience of seeing a cat for the first time.

First, we would have noticed this furry creature that looked different in some way from other furry creatures. If we were old enough to talk, we may have called it "doggie" or "bear" if that was the only reference we had to a furry creature. We could have seen this cat's tail, color, eyes, or whiskers as its defining features. We may have seen it eye-to-eye, or walking behind us while we were seated, or scratching our arm as we squeezed its neck.

Throughout this experience, **we were completely captivated**. What was this strange creature? What does it feel like when I touch it? How would it react if I pulled this fuzzy part? What sound does it make? How does it smell?

Our initial emotion may have been fear or curiosity or delight, but chances are that, no matter what we felt, we noticed various aspects of the cat, and our attention was focused completely on doing so in a way that was quite natural.

The fact that we noticed the cat at all means that **it held some interest** for us. We continued to pay attention because we **enjoyed the process of learning new things** about it. We were able to sustain our focus for a period of time because we found the cat **more interesting than other stimuli** around us.

In other words, we noticed something new, we were actively drawing distinctions about it, we used our limited experience to play with different possibilities and perspectives, and we stayed present.

We were being mindful. Without training. Without meditating. We knew how to become engaged by simply following **our innate sense of wonder**.

Now, does that seem so hard? Of course not.

The only hard part about being mindful is remembering to do it! As we become caught up in the demands of modern adult life, we must direct our attention to so many different stimuli that we get out of the habit of being aware of the present moment in a clear way.

The good news is that you can vastly improve the quality and quantity of your mindful moments, and you can do so in ways that are easy and immensely enjoyable.

In fact, ***the more you enjoy the process, the more likely you are to cultivate mindfulness naturally.***

Before we go any further, let me be clear about one thing: meditation is an extremely useful and effective method for developing mindfulness, and I heartily encourage you to try it. That being said, it is important to note that **meditation is NOT the best mindfulness tool for you if you do not feel motivated to do it!**

If we go with Dr. Langer's definition of mindfulness, we must first have an interest in noticing new things. If we view meditation as something we tried before but found it difficult or not likely to be something we'll do on a regular basis, we are not likely to create enough momentum to engage in it in any kind of meaningful way.

And if you are just "going through the motions" in ANY activity, you always have two options:

1) Find something new and interesting and captivating about the activity

OR

2) Find an alternate activity that serves the same purpose

Now, I'm not saying you should give up on meditation. In fact, you might say I'm sneaking you into the back door of the House of Mindfulness, hoping to lure you into meditation eventually.

And that would be true, because I do believe we can all benefit from meditation.

HOWEVER, if you can't get too excited about the idea of meditation, then it simply isn't the best option for you RIGHT NOW. You'd be better off trying some alternate activity that serves the same purpose—helping you develop greater mindfulness.

You can always come back to meditation later—when you are truly interested in it!

Until then, let's take a look at some other options, shall we?

Earlier, I mentioned a book written by Dr. Langer—*On Becoming An Artist: Reinventing Yourself Through Mindful Creativity*. One of my favorite quotes from the book is this:

“All it takes to become an artist is to start doing art.”

Simple, isn't it? Dr. Langer points out that we celebrate as creative those who show us how the commonplace may be made different. This is exactly what we're going to do as we examine the eight different intelligences and discover ways to play with mindfulness in each area.

So, you might think of it this way:

“All it takes to become mindful is to start playing with mindfulness.”

Nothing too serious, you understand. That would feel like WORK, and really, who wants to do more of that? We could all use more play in our lives, and we have the perfect opportunity to do that as we explore the various pathways to mindfulness.

If this sounds ridiculously simple, rejoice! You are already getting it.

But now let's take a look at those eight multiple intelligences I keep talking about.

Don't you love it when educated folks do extensive research and come up with theories that are both revolutionary and obvious? I do.

That's why it is such a pleasure to read the work of **Howard Gardner**, another Harvard professor, who wrote a groundbreaking book back in 1983 called *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. In this book, he proposed that there are actually seven different kinds of “smart” and everyone has the potential to develop their intelligence in all of these areas.

In later years, Dr. Gardner added an eighth kind of smart, and there has been discussion of a ninth. For our purposes, **we're going to stick with eight** just because that seems like enough intelligences for us to play with right now.

I'm going to list them for you in a bit, but first, let me ask you something.

Have you ever made a statement like:

- ▲ “He didn’t do well in school, but he is such a talented artist.”
- ▲ “She can’t balance her checkbook, but she’s absolutely brilliant when it comes to designing homes.”
- ▲ “He dropped out of high school and is now a very successful musician.”
- ▲ “She has a natural gift for working with animals.”
- ▲ “That guy can fix absolutely anything.”
- ▲ “She has an amazing way of motivating her students.”
- ▲ “He is a born leader.”
- ▲ “She is extremely centered and has a deep wisdom about the world.”

If so, you already have an understanding of multiple intelligences.

We all know people are very talented in certain areas. We all know those who didn’t do well in school but became very successful in life. And we all have our own combination of strengths and, um, challenges.

So, it comes as no surprise that Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences is simply a description of the different ways we may be gifted.

But it’s also a very uplifting and encouraging statement about human potential, because although we may have a natural tendency to gravitate toward a certain type of learning and develop our talents in a couple of specific areas, the truth is that **we can gain greater skill in ALL areas.**

If you need an example of this, think of my favorite multiply intelligent guy, Leonardo da Vinci.

Painter. Designer. Biologist. Sculptor. Musician. Poet. Dancer.
Architect. Athlete. Chef. Mathematician. Engineer.

And let's just say he was no slouch in ANY of these categories! He truly excelled in all areas.

Now, I'm not saying we're all as gifted as Leonardo, but I **am** saying that we all have far more potential than we are ever likely to develop. The biggest barrier is almost always rooted in the beliefs we have created about our abilities—or lack thereof!

But there have been plenty of books written about that—this isn't one of them.

Instead, we're going to use Howard Gardner's categories of smart to help us **build a richly diverse and satisfying mindfulness practice**.

As you look over this list, be aware of the areas that feel compelling to you personally, and also note those that make you think, "Oooh...I could use some improvement in that one!"

However, resist the temptation to say, "Yeah, that's me!" and focus instead on considering each and every area as a new playground for you to explore.

Deal? Good. **Remember: mindfulness is all about being open and flexible!** Let's be aware of that and remain as nonjudgmental as possible, shall we?

By staying open and playing with mindfulness in all eight areas, we will develop a variety of powerful tools to help us become calm, clear, and wildly creative. (I threw in that "wildly" part—it's a lot more inspiring and conjures a more joyful image!)

Okay, here's the list of the eight multiple intelligences:

■ Linguistic intelligence (**"word smart"**)—using words (written, spoken, sung) to express ourselves

- Logical-mathematical intelligence (**“logic smart”**)—seeing connections between numbers, recognizing patterns and calculating formulas and solutions
- Spatial intelligence (**“picture smart”**)—using space, shape, shadow, color and other visual cues to connect with the world
- Musical intelligence (**“music smart”**)—using music or sound as our language of reference in engaging with others
- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (**“body smart”**)—expressing ourselves through movement, whether that’s sports, dance, or working with our hands
- Naturalistic intelligence (**“nature smart”**)—a keen sense of connection with nature (plants, animals, land forms)
- Interpersonal intelligence (**“people smart”**)—experiencing the world through relationships with others
- Intrapersonal intelligence (**“self smart”**)—a natural interest in self-study, contemplation, and independent thinking

Eight different kinds of smart.

Eight different ways of engaging in the world.

Eight areas in which to discover our latent talents and reconnect to those we used to flex more regularly.

Eight huge opportunities to develop greater mindfulness!

And so, without further adieu, let’s jump into the fun stuff, shall we?

Linguistic Intelligence **(“word smart”)**

Linguistic intelligence is considered to be the most universal. Our education system has focused primarily on this approach to learning, so it’s hard to say whether we’re linguistic because we were taught that way

or whether those who developed our approach to education were brilliant about recognizing this universal intelligence!

Still, I'm going with the idea that we tend to be linguistic because we have spent years developing this particular area of intelligence, and that if our education system focused on, say, spatial intelligence, then that might be the most universal. Consider it an indication that we can choose to develop even our weakest areas by simply investing more time in honing those skills.

The fact that our schools focus on linguistic learning has resulted in a great deal of frustration for those who are naturally gifted in other areas. We all know wonderful artists, athletes, musicians and others who are talented and successful in life but for whom school was a real struggle. If you count yourself as one of those, consider this your moment of validation! You can be brilliant and still flunk out of school. Of course, I don't recommend it!

I do have some recommendations, however, and I've intentionally mixed tips and activities with resources so that you can tickle different parts of your brain as you read through the list.

#1 Get Sensuous

Try paying attention to certain kinds of words that you hear or read throughout the day.

One way to stimulate creative thinking and reinforce the connection between our linguistic intelligence and our bodily/kinesthetic intelligence is to focus on the way we use "sense" words in phrases.

For example, someone might say "I hear you" when they really mean "I understand you." Here's a list of a few to consider:

"I hear you."

"I got just a taste of the kind of work he does."

"I see your point."

"Let's stay in touch."

"They were hungry for more information."

"She has a thirst for knowledge."

"He's got an itch to travel."

Listen to these phrases when they are spoken, and take note of the different ones that you hear. Pay attention to the various meanings and, if you like, keep a list.

Most important is to take a few seconds to create a visual or physical experience of each phrase. What would it feel like to have an itch to travel? Picture it, sense it, and wonder about how the phrase was first used in this way. Use these kinds of phrases as your personal trigger to pay attention!

#2 Flip Through

One of the best ways to mindfully increase your linguistic intelligence is to build your vocabulary. Leave a small dictionary in an accessible place—in your bag, desk drawer, dashboard, table next to your sofa, kitchen counter, bathroom sink, and flip through it when you get a spare moment.

Here's the mindfulness part: you have to NOTICE the dictionary and flip through it at least once a day! If you get used to seeing it in one spot, move it to another.

You'll be surprised how many conversations you can start by simply asking someone if they can use a certain word in a sentence.

It's also fun to do this with a thesaurus or a rhyming dictionary.

One vocab-boosting book I recommend is [WordSmart II \(2nd edition\): How to Build a More Powerful Vocabulary](#) by Adam Robinson. He includes ideas for incorporating new vocabulary words into your everyday conversations without sounding ridiculous!

#3 Translation, Please

If you're more interested in playing with a variety of other languages, here's a tip: go to www.dictionary.reference.com/translate and type in the word or phrase of your choice, and you'll get the translated version in whatever language you choose. Be intentional about creating the connection in your brain between these words and the actual item.

For example, you might choose a type of fruit or vegetable to translate into a number of languages, and create a card with an image of the item plus the list of translated phrases. Stick it on your refrigerator or kitchen cabinet and use this as a way to trigger your awareness of the various ways to say the same thing.

Notice different types of that particular item—a Fuji apple? A round eggplant? An orange bell pepper? Pay attention to the differences and similarities in the items themselves as well as the words translated into different languages,

Whenever you see or hear the word for that fruit or vegetable—in the market, on a menu—conjure the image to go along with the word. You're trying to build a connection between a linguistic process and a visual one—and you can make it tasty, too!

At www.dictionary.com, you can also sign up for word-of-the-day programs in various languages. You'll get daily emails featuring new words that can help you stimulate your linguistic learning AND awareness!

#4 Listen for Big—Bigger—Biggest

Pick a basic descriptive word—the first one you would learn if you were starting to read or speak in any language. For example, let's choose the word **big**. Now, pay attention to the various words that are used to describe something big.

Can you easily put words in order of magnitude? Big—Hefty—Enormous? See if there is consistency in the way people use the same word.

You might also try:

small

slow

fast

boring

smart

frustrating

funny

Hint: these are also fun to use for the translation game above!

#5 Play the Secret Word Game

I don't watch a lot of TV, but once in a while, I catch the Ellen Degeneres Show. She is absolutely hilarious, and one of the things I like about her show is the secret word game.

Before a guest comes on, the audience is clued in to a secret word that Ellen will try to get the guest to say. The guest knows there is a secret word, but has no clue what it might be. The audience members get excited because if the guest says the word, they each get some sort of prize.

So, let's say the word is **butter**. Ellen's job is to somehow bring up a topic of conversation that will cause the guest to say this word. She

might say, “So, are you on any special diet right now? Like, what do you put on your toast these days?”

Of course, the funny part is that it can be surprisingly difficult to get someone to say a particular word, even with plenty of hints!

You can play this game yourself. Open a dictionary at random, and pick a word that is fairly common. Now, make it your goal to see how many times you can get others to say it.

No fair saying something like, “What starts with a B and sort of rhymes with udder?” (Although, truth be told, Ellen has sometimes resorted to such desperate measures with her guests!)

Some fun ones to try are:

Chocolate
Peanut butter
(can you tell I like food?)
Banana
Cow
Dog
Rabbit
Bus
Toe
Elbow
Difficult
Slippery
Fascinating
Sexy

It doesn't matter what word you choose. What's important is having fun with the process of **using language to elicit language!**

#6 Clean Out Your Mind's Ear

You can develop your “hearing” linguistic intelligence by focusing on what is called your “mind's ear”—similar to your mind's eye.

“Visualize”—there isn't really a sound-type word for this!—the following sounds:

Your friend's voice saying your name.
A famous person saying your name.
Your favorite actor saying, “I love you.”

Notice the different pitch and timber of each voice and see how clearly you can remember that particular sound.

Listen for phrases or intonations throughout the day that might be especially challenging to hear with your mind's ear.

Can you hear your mother's voice with an accent? Can you hear your friend's voice in falsetto? Can you hear your grandmother's voice in another language?

Start really listening to voices and distinguish the subtle nuances that make each one unique.

To strengthen the connection between linguistic learning and musical learning, use your mind's ear to hear your mother's voice singing "Happy Birthday" to you, or your favorite singer's voice singing a nursery rhyme.

#7 The Scarlet Letter

In honor of poor Hester Prynne, start seeing the letter **A** in **red**. Scan signs, shopping bags, logos on t-shirts, newspapers, and anything else that might have a **scarlet A at the beginning of a word**.

We see whole words easily, but picking out **one letter** is a good exercise to develop our visual ability to distinguish a particular shape within a word. Adding the color **red** creates an additional boost in building a connection between linguistic and spatial intelligences.

#8 Writing Down the Bones

My favorite writing book of all time is Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*. It's a palm-sized book packed with simple but engaging exercises that put you right into the flow of writing.

It's the single best prescription for writer's block that I've ever come across, and I heartily recommend it!

Of course, the trick is to use it. As always, it's best to think of this as a mindfulness game you are playing with yourself.

Tuck this little book in the pocket of a favorite coat or jacket, along with a tiny notebook. The fun thing about this is that you can fill small pages really quickly, and that's pretty satisfying in itself! Flip open to any exercise, and just start writing.

If you usually type on a computer, try writing it by hand. But if you already do a lot of writing by hand, try typing it! You want to hook your

bodily/kinesthetic intelligence with your linguistic intelligence, so engaging in purposeful movement to create the words in your head will help facilitate this process.

If you really want to get into it, use a brightly colored—or even scented—ink pen and sit outside while writing. I suppose you could sing the words out loud while you're writing them, but that might be a little TOO “wildly creative” for those in your vicinity!

#9 The Name Game

Okay, it's kind of kooky, but this is a great way to play with language and start paying attention to beginning letters.

You've probably heard this song on an oldies radio station, or annoyed your siblings by singing it using their names.

Take a name, like, say, Tom.

It would go like this:

Tom, Tom Bo-Bom
Banana Fana Fo-Fom
Me My Mo-Mom
Tom

Or try Steve:

Steve, Steve, Bo-Beve
Banana Fana Fo-Feve
Me My Mo-Meve
Steve.

Now, choose a longer name, like Tiffany.

Tiffany, Tiffany, Bo-Biffany
Banana Fana Fo-Fiffany
Me My Mo-Miffany
Tiffany

Or something more exotic, like Isabella.

Isabella, Isabella, Bo-Bisabella
Banana Fana Fo-Fisabella
Me My Mo-Misabella
Isabella

Silly? Sure. So is pig Latin.

Admit it, though—didn't you envy those who could speak pig Latin so quickly that you couldn't understand a word they said? This kind of intelligence lends itself to morphing words, pronouncing them backward, or creating whole new secret languages.

You can look for ways to play with words in the same way without being too annoying. When you are introduced to someone, picture their name and ask how they spell it.

This buys you some time while your brain is filing this piece of info, and you can take it a step further by developing a visual image as a mnemonic device to help you remember it.

Just meet a woman named Meghan? Picture her dancing around a May Day pole, carrying an Uzi. Get it? May + Gun. The more unusual your mental picture, the more likely you are to remember it. Simply remembering that she looks kind of like your friend Mary and has red hair isn't compelling enough to lock into your memory. You want to combine the sound of her name, the image of the printed letters, and a colorful, whimsical picture of her all together in one package.

Create your own variation of the Name Game, and stitch your linguistic intelligence together with your sense of play.

#10 All the World's A Crossword Puzzle

If you're not into crossword puzzles, I highly recommend that you try a few, just for fun.

But here's a way to start paying attention to random words: come up with crossword puzzle clues to match.

For example, someone might tell you that they live on Elm Street. You file that away as "Nightmare on....."

If the waitress asks if you want cream in your coffee, you answer (first!) and then think "milky substance often stirred into coffee."

It's fun to do this with "Jeopardy" hints, too. You know—instead of coming up with the answer, you come up with a question.

If you drive past a sign that says "Yield to Pedestrians" you might offer "What should you do when you drive up to a crosswalk in an intersection?"

By switching questions and answers, we're creating an awareness of the way things are connected, and we're likely to come up with some unusual ties. It's all about deepening our linguistic intelligence by tweaking order in a mindful way.

#11 Get the Mammoth Book

Richard Manchester has written a number of great word game books, but the biggest, fattest, most mammoth book of all is **The Third New Mammoth Book of Word Games: Hundreds of Brainteasing Word Games, Mazes, Cryptograms, and Many More Pencil Pleasing Puzzles.**

You're going to feel like a kid again—and isn't that the point?

When we're having fun, we're being mindful. When we're learning, we have an opportunity to draw distinctions, shift our perspective, and be open to new ideas.

Ah.....doesn't mindfulness feel good?

#12 Full-Immersion Letter Festival

Ready for a full-immersion program? You'll love this!

A group of women here in Portland have created quite a stir with their latest project: focusing on a single letter for a week or two at a time in everything they do.

Now, you can go all out or limit it to a certain category, but it could look something like this:

Week One: The Letter A

Eat arugula, asparagus, artichokes, apple pie...or go to a restaurant that starts with the letter A...

Read poetry by authors whose names begin with A....

Listen to music by artists whose names begin with A...

Rent movies that begin with the letter A....

Wear clothing that an artist would wear, or something the color of aubergines, or by a designer whose name begins with A....

Week Two: The Letter B....

You can see how this works. By the time you have finished (and stretched your brain during X week!), you will have experienced greater mindfulness about nearly every aspect of your life by simply framing it in terms of the assigned letter.

Try this with your family or a group of friends, neighbors or co-workers. You might want to limit it to a regular Wednesday night dinner party, or expand it to include every day and every aspect imaginable. It's up to you.

This is a brilliantly creative brain-stimulating way to build your awareness of beginning letters as well as a terrific excuse for exploration of the arts, food, and anything else you can think of.

Honestly, this is the greatest get-out-of-your-rut formula I've ever heard —TRY IT!

Logical/Mathematical Intelligence **("logic smart")**

If you think of yourself as someone who hates math, stop right now.

We're talking about math in the bigger sense. It's not just whether or not you can do algebra. Logical/mathematical intelligence is what helps you see problems and create solutions to those problems.

Sure, all geeks have this in abundance, but everyone has some. We don't have to be a math whiz to have a developed sense of logic. Our idea about our ability in this area is, not surprisingly, directly related to our success or failure in math and science classes.

But if you've never done well in either of those subjects, you can still develop a terrific sense of logic, and you can use mindfulness activities to do it.

Just as we did with words and letters for linguistic intelligence, we are going to look at ways to consider numbers, formulas, and patterns in entertaining ways.

Don't worry. There isn't a test at the end!

Let's have fun with this....

#1 Play With Blocks

I'm only partially kidding on this one.

Our earliest understanding of logic comes from our childhood blocks. Logical/Mathematical intelligence develops through manipulation and direct sensory contact with concrete objects.

We stack blocks on top of each other. We make twin towers of blocks. We line them up next to each other to form a long snake. We put nine together to make a square.

Even before we know what "nine" is, we have a sense of shape and pattern and the earliest concept of numbers. This intelligence forms naturally in a clear, abstract, wordless and imageless way. Later, things get more complicated, but when we're one with the blocks, we're simply incorporating our logic with our bodily/kinesthetic intelligence (actually lifting and placing the blocks) and our spatial intelligence (understanding how to stack several towers to form one big one.)

Keep some miniature blocks on your desk or coffee table or as a centerpiece on your dining room table. Consider it an abstract art piece that is always changing.

You can get some very interesting kinds of blocks these days, so visit your favorite local toy store and see what inspires you.

Then bring them home and set them up somewhere obvious so that you will feel lazy if you don't change the formation every now and then.

(Well, I never said I wouldn't use guilt as a motivator!)

#2 Practice Estimating

The cool thing about estimating is that you often don't find out the real answer, so you can view it as less like a test and more like creative expression.

The trick is to use unusual counters. For example, you can measure short distances in terms of things like a piece of spaghetti (uncooked!), a toothpick, fork, dollar bill, or grande coffee cup.

You can guess how many hairs are on your arm, or how many squares of toilet tissue are on a roll, or how many windows on your street.

This requires some basic math skills, sure—you'll have to do a little multiplication. But mostly, you're going to start focusing on areas and paying attention to the particular qualities of random units.

You'll get to flex your spatial intelligence as well, since you'll need to eyeball it in most cases.

No need to get out the measuring tape or actually count every hair on your forearm. Instead, use this opportunity to take a look at the UNIT (a hair) and how you can guesstimate numbers (counting the hairs in a square inch, say, and then guessing the number of square inches on your forearm.)

Come up with several ways to describe your height using a variety of units.

And then start drawing distinctions—is a dollar bill longer or shorter than a grande coffee cup? How many toothpicks to equal the length of a piece of spaghetti?

You can do this with weight, as well, which is a rather nice way to think of your body, especially if you look at using counters like apples or bananas or chocolate. How luscious you are! How delicious!

Want to feel lighter? Estimate your weight using a unit that is heavier than a pound. A gallon of milk, perhaps?

Up to a challenge? Try doing this with time—though I must warn you that it's a bit trickier. Why? Because we simply aren't used to measuring time in anything other than seconds/minutes/hours/days/weeks/months/years.

What if we measured time by interesting units like how long it takes a maple leaf to fall from ten feet? Come to think of it, why do we use feet? Or meters?

Mostly, estimating helps us be mindful of the various arbitrary ways we measure things, and we start asking how we can use units that are meaningful—or at least whimsical. Using units of measurement as triggers for mindfulness can be a really effective and interesting way to incorporate logico/mathematical awareness throughout the day.

#3 Learn Math Magic

Well, you KNEW there was magic involved, right?

Scott Flansbury has written a surprisingly entertaining book called ***Math Magic: The Human Calculator Shows How to Master Everyday Math Problems in Seconds***. Gee, this would have been really helpful back in elementary school! Where was he then?

Anyone who is called “the human calculator” has my vote, but it is really quite validating to see that there are tricks involved in solving math problems, and learning even a couple of these will raise your opinion of your math skills considerably! And with dozens of used copies available, you can pick this up on Amazon.com for less than \$1.00. Talk about a bargain!

#4 Double Your Recipes—In Your Head

If you've done much baking, you know that simply doubling the amount of baking powder doesn't translate exactly to twice as many perfect cakes. Some things just aren't deliciously scalable.

Still, cooking gives us all kinds of opportunities to play with numbers. Don't think of them as fractions. Consider them delectable units destined for your dining room table.

And pay attention to the way we count certain kinds of ingredients. A cube of butter? How does that compare to a cube of sugar? How many cubes of sugar in a cube of butter—by size?

How do they compare in terms of calories?

Eating mindfully requires paying attention to each bite as we chew it slowly. That can be interesting, but if you ask me, it's more fun to be mindful of food in general.

Start with the measuring and estimating and doubling, and I guarantee you'll develop greater awareness of serving sizes!

#5 Start Seeing Sevens

You can use almost anything to play a mindfulness game, including numbers.

Here's a way to practice becoming aware of what's around you by focusing on the number **seven**.

There's a reason why those brilliant producers of "Sesame Street" pick a letter and number to focus on in every episode. At every age, we learn best by focusing on a particular target and seeing that target in a variety of settings.

We're going to choose the number seven for two reasons:

*It is not likely to be present as the ending numbers in a price—although research has shown repeatedly that we LIKE prices ending in seven!

*I just like the number seven

So, here's what you're going to do: notice any numbers that you see throughout the day that **begin or end with seven**.

That's all. It's a quick scanning exercise to help you see this number in places you wouldn't normally notice.

Here are some places you can start scanning for the number seven:

- ▲ price tags
- ▲ license plates on cars
- ▲ signs and billboards
- ▲ logos

You can also notice the number seven in:

- ▲ the checks you write or receive
- ▲ the numbers on your receipts

▲your odometer

Remember that you are not trying to see ALL sevens—only those at the beginning or end of a string of numbers. You’re going to do a quick scan, that’s all.

Although you might think this little game could be quite distracting—and it could be if you are, say, an accountant—the reality is that it is a surprisingly calming exercise.

It’s also surprisingly exciting in that sort of quiet “Sesame Street” way—you noticed! You paid attention! You learned!

This is an opportunity to practice looking FOR something instead of simply looking AT something. It’s a different process for your brain.

Of course, the next step is to notice distinctions in the way seven is written, or if it is incorporated into an image in any way.

When I lived in rural Japan many years ago, there were lots of old ladies who were spectacularly stooped from years of working in the rice fields. We called them “sevens” because they were bent over into that shape.

Start seeing sevens around you in all kinds of non-numeric ways, and you’ll be strengthening the connection between logical/mathematical intelligence and spatial intelligence.

Trees? Mail box posts? You’ll be amazed at how many sevens you see around you.

Simply notice them seamlessly, without stopping everything you’re doing. You want to build your ability to step in and out of mindfulness effortlessly, so don’t make it a big ordeal.

It’s a game, after all!

#6 Get Connected To The Brain

I am a confirmed neuroscience geek (I consider it one of my favorite ego attachments!) and I have found some great sources for the latest news about research and discoveries that are fascinating in their application to the Real World.

One of my favorite sites is BrainConnection.com. It's got some great resources for teachers as well as short little quizzes you can take to see how much you know about the brain.

You can sign up for their free newsletter and they'll send you snippets of recent research and you can click through to those that interest you.

That's a great alternative for those of you who aren't likely to pick up a science magazine, because it comes right to your email box and it takes only a couple of minutes to read something truly cutting edge and presented in terms everyone can understand. Because it's focused on the brain, you'll learn a lot of simple things you can do to improve your own beautiful mind.

#7 Examine Small Things

Remember how fascinating it was to look at tiny organisms through a microscope?

A magnifying glass is a great alternative to a microscope, and something you can keep around for other things, like removing a sliver from your big toe. Keep one OUT, not hidden in a drawer, and put it somewhere you're likely to use it. It could be a regular garden tool, hanging up with the trowel. You can use it to examine insects, leaves, blossoms, seeds or anything else you discover.

Or, you might put it in a bowl full of stones, pine cones, seashells and other natural items in plain site on a coffee table or desk. Make it an engaging centerpiece that invites exploration of patterns.

The wonderful thing about noticing small life forms is that it creates a quiet stillness in us as well as a reverence for life. Looking closely at the intricacies of tiny things makes us feel incredibly big—and responsible.

It's a simple way to feel connected to the world in a much more mindful way.

#8 Pick A Constellation

Just as examining small items makes us feel enormous, looking to the heavens helps us put our worries into perspective.

There's just nothing like the vastness of the universe to remind us that our "big worries" are really quite small.

You don't have to know all the constellations, but it's fun to learn just a few, even (especially) if they are sort of obscure ones that nobody else knows. Check out a constellation book at the library and pick one that you like. Learn as much as you can about it, and figure out how to find it in the night sky.

It's great to have a telescope in order to really see what's out there, but it's not necessary. All you need is a clear night sky and a few recognizable markers, like the North Star or the Southern Cross.

Pick a constellation, and make it yours. Let it remind you of the enormity of life in all its forms, and celebrate the sense of smallness that comes with this realization.

Sure, we like to think of ourselves and our lives as important, but don't be afraid to see the flip side. Sometimes sensing our smallness is exactly what we need to settle us and spark a bit of mindfulness about our place on this planet.

To learn more about the wonder of the universe, here's my favorite site:

<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

It features a **different astronomy photo each day**, with comments from various folks who know about such things. Fascinating!

#9 Pick and Flip

This is a good way to tweak our spatial intelligence skills as well as focusing on the symbolic language of math—numbers. We're going to visually turn numbers upside down to help us create awareness of shapes.

We're going to stick with the number seven, since we're already noticing it. Now, when you see a seven at the beginning or end of a string of numbers (or in a logo, the shape of a tree, or anything else) simply flip it upside down in your head.

Practice picking a seven and flipping it upside down in your head. Simply hold it in your mind's eye for a few seconds, without letting it morph into an L or a seven.

This is a remarkable way to zap your brain's ability to manipulate images, and you'll find yourself doing it with other triggers, too!

It's all about shifting perspectives in a very literal way, and it's an important skill to develop as we play our way toward greater mindfulness.

#10 Find Interesting Patterns In Numbers

One way to play with numbers is to notice unusual configurations in dates. I'm especially fond of celebrating pi day on March 14th (3/14, which is similar to 3.14.....) by eating pie!

Now that we carry phones with us everywhere, we have become more familiar with the letters that correspond with each number. One beer-loving friend was elated to learn that his phone number spelled C-O-L-D M-U-G! What does your phone number spell?

If you think of numbers as a secret code, even the most mundane things can be viewed as whimsical. Does your birth date spell a word if you use phone code? Mine does! What about your address? Yep—it works for me.

Your checking account number? Your Visa number?

Okay, no need to translate every number into a word, but do recognize that you come in contact with numbers throughout the day and you can choose to play with them if you like. Any time you turn numbers into something meaningful, you are making snappy connections in your brain!

Developing your logical/mathematical intelligence doesn't require mastering calculus or memorizing complex formulas. Find fun or especially silly ways to use numbers, and you'll be tweaking your awareness of the symbolic language of math.

Spatial Intelligence **("picture smart")**

Surprisingly, you don't have to have good eyesight in order to develop greater spatial intelligence, the central feature of which is simply the direct perception of the visual world.

Of course, it helps. But even blind individuals are able to heighten their skills in such areas as determining depth and estimating trajectory, and their perception of texture is extremely well developed.

Spatial intelligence requires a sensitivity to such elements as shape, line, space, balance, light/shadow, pattern and color. Most of us think in terms of visual images—for example, if we say “dog” we instantly create an image in our brain of a dog first and then perhaps switch to the written word or our favorite canine friend. Increasing our ability to make distinctions among visual stimuli is the key to building a more mindful connection to the visible world.

Our spatial intelligence is also in charge of our sense of direction and even such tasks as placing furniture in a room in a pleasing way. It’s our sense of dimension and understanding of what fills space—and how.

Our educational system focuses a great deal on developing linguistic and logical/mathematical intelligence, but many magnet schools have emerged that feature an equal emphasis on sharpening our ability to see with the mind’s eye.

You don’t have to go to any special school to develop your spatial intelligence—instead, simply focus on becoming more mindful of the elements of the visual world.

#1 See Arrows

One of the ways we can start to become aware of directions and space is by noticing arrows.

Oh, sure, we are surrounded by them all the time, but we stop seeing them once we become accustomed to the signs around us.

Notice street signs that you pass every day and pay attention to the arrows. Distinguish among the various shapes of arrows and note how they point in different directions.

Do they have fat stems? Do they have curving stems? Are there symbols that serve as arrows without having a pointed tip?

Once of my favorite secret arrows is in the logo for Federal Express. If you look at the capital letter E and the lower case x, you will see that they create a perfect white arrow formed by the white space between the two letters.

I challenge you to start seeing that arrow every time you see a Fed Ex logo—on a truck, on an envelope or package, on a sign in a store window.

If you've never noticed the arrow before, you will now, and you'll be amazed that you didn't notice it before.

Look for arrows that are not obvious. They don't have to be huge—you can find them on your computer screen right now, I'll bet! Just start seeing them, and make distinctions in the way they are presented as well as the purpose for which they are used.

#2 Take Direction

Once you get good at noticing arrows, pick a certain type of arrow—the Fed Ex one works well—and use it as a trigger to help you get oriented in terms of north, south, east and west.

This is a particularly good challenge if you find yourself getting turned around easily. By giving yourself a trigger—remember, it's not EVERY arrow, just a certain type, or color, or purpose—you can sharpen your ability to ascertain directions by learning how to find and use markers.

Like, say, the sun.

Whenever you see your specified arrow, take a moment to detect the sun. This may be easier if you live in a sunny climate, but even with cloud cover, you can learn to sense the direction of the sun.

Use the arrow as your reminder to pay attention to your specific place at that moment, and once you get your bearings, try to figure out which direction that arrow is pointing.

It's an intriguing way to be mindful of where you are.

#3 Get A Compass

Maybe I should have mentioned this one before the last one?

Don't consider it cheating if you use a compass to help you when you are first playing the arrow game. It's a wonderful tool even if you have a great sense of direction.

Keep it in the pocket of your favorite hiking jacket or general lounging coat. You are more likely to use it if you are unhurried, so don't stick it in your briefcase unless you regularly find yourself with idle moments during which you could pull it out without feeling too conspicuous!

Going on a hike or just a neighborhood walk is a perfect time to check directions, but you can also do it in a coffee shop or restaurant. Involve others and see who gets closest to determining north.

If you have a car with a compass in it, check it when you notice an arrow. You'll gain a stronger understanding of which direction you're heading and the subtleties of light and shadow will start to make more sense to you.

#4 Start Coloring

You can use blank paper or coloring books if you like, but I've got another suggestion:

Go to ColoringTherapy.com and download one of their lovely mandala patterns for about \$3. Grab your crayons and have fun!

In Coloring Therapy, the focus of coloring acts to suspend inner dialogue, resulting in greater mindfulness.

It's a calming way to spend a few minutes and it will generate greater awareness of color and space.

#5 Play The Color-Match Game

When we were first learning our colors, we often used what we were wearing to show our awareness of color. We'd point to our shirt and say "Red!" and our parents and teachers would ask us to point to other things around us that were also red.

As elementary as it sounds, this is an excellent way to reconnect to our ability to sense color. And now that we have a more developed color vocabulary—"red" has expanded to include "scarlet" and "burgundy"—we can use the color-matching game to distinguish subtle shades of various colors.

Start with what you're wearing. When you're getting dressed in the morning, select one of the colors in your clothing or jewelry and make a mental note to see that particular shade wherever it might appear today.

There is no limit here—you can match flowers, tile, a roof, a car, a vase on your desk, your friend's eyes, the plate in a restaurant, the produce at the market—anything.

Be clear and do your best to find the closest shade. This isn't just finding red—it's trying to find the SAME red.

By developing your color sense, you will become more mindful of the colors around you. You're likely to want to include a greater variety of colors in your wardrobe once you start playing this game because you will become so much more aware of the possibilities.

If you find yourself going clothes shopping, don't blame me. Instead, simply consider it a sign that you have become more mindful of color.

#6 Paint A Wall

Well, let's make that a wall in YOUR home, unless you have friends or family willing to let you experiment with their home décor.

I have somewhat of a reputation as a color fiend. I can't help it. I am absolutely inspired by vivid color, and look for ways to surround myself with rich tones. Every room in my house is painted a bold color, and I love it.

If you live with white walls, start small. Pick one wall and paint it a glorious hue that gets your brain dancing. Color DOES stimulate our brains, and although you can use design books or shelter magazines for inspiration, the reality is that it's your home and you should choose the color that speaks to YOU.

It's the quickest, easiest way to stimulate your spatial intelligence. It takes only an hour or two, but you'll get a visual and visceral thrill when you see that wall every day.

#7 Post A Map

It's a great big world, and there is so much geography to learn!

You don't have to win any contests, but do use maps as a way to develop greater mindfulness of distance and geographic formations.

It's intriguing that we wait to learn about a place until it's in the news, and then suddenly, everywhere we look, there's a map of that area and we're stunned to realize how little we know about it.

Pick a place, near or far, and pick up a map of any type that interests you. A road map is great but a map of the world works beautifully, too.

Now, put that map on the wall (your bright new wall, perhaps?) and spend some time gazing at it.

Place your map where you can see it at eye level, and take ten seconds every day to pick out a new corner to focus your gaze.

You don't need to study it, but you do want to start to notice various aspects of it. What's the shape of this area/country/state when you see the map from across the room? What strikes you first thing about this map? Where are the cities or rivers or mountains clustered?

If you subscribe to [National Geographic magazine](#), you've probably got tons of maps that come inside every issue, but you can easily pick up a local map at a bookstore. You can even go online and download a map of a place you'd like to visit someday and print it out so you can put it on a kitchen cupboard.

When you get so used to looking at it that you find yourself losing interest, simply download a different map and spend time gazing at that while you're waiting for your microwave to beep or the water in your kettle to boil.

Don't shy away from topographical maps. They're a great way to see land masses without the clutter of place names, and you'll develop a greater appreciation for things like elevation.

#8 Google Your Address

Now, I'm not sure this works for all addresses, but since Google is so global, I'm sure it's just a matter of time before it will.

Here's what you do: Go to [Google.com](#) and click on "maps". Type in your address—or that of someone you know—and play with the satellite and hybrid map options.

It's like zooming in from above. You can see the whole area, including the houses, yards, streets, your neighbor's swimming pool...everything! And you can pull way back until you get a view of your part of the continent, or scroll to the north, south, east or west.

If this doesn't get you excited about satellites, nothing will! It's a fun way to get a whole new perspective on your neighborhood.

Or get familiar with a place you'll be visiting soon.

Or find out what your old college roommate's neighborhood looks like.

You will love it!

#9 Be A Shape Shifter

It would be nice if you could vaporize yourself and slip through the crack under the door, but this isn't what I'm talking about.

My version of shape shifting isn't quite as super hero-ish, but it's still fun. All it takes is a little imagination and a willingness to play with your mind's eye.

Take a look around you and pick an object—a chair, table, bookcase, potted plant—it doesn't matter. Now, visualize it melting right into the floor, and try to see how much space it would fill. Can you picture it flat? Can you picture it melted on the floor in a puddle? Can you picture it in the same shape but two-dimensionally?

Picture Salvador Dali's melting clocks and you'll understand. You want to tweak your mind's attachment to shape and form, and mess things up a bit. What you're really doing is creating a more flexible way of perceiving things spatially, and helping your brain develop greater perspective and a sense of possibility.

You can also do this with flat objects, like an area rug or even a piece of paper. How much space would it take to pop it into a cube? Can you picture it as a tower? How tall would it be?

No need to get too specific. You're playing, remember!

Start seeing your own melted clocks and boxy carpets and flattened plants, and you'll start to become more mindful of the dimensions of space.

And you'll smile for no reason.

#10 Create Word Pictures

We would do well to get our linguistic intelligence and our spatial intelligence more acquainted!

Here's a way to do that: start creating word pictures.

Begin with simple things, like visualizing something you describe verbally first, such as a "blue cube, yellow circle, green leaf" sequence. Try to mix three-dimensional with two-dimensional images. Can you see the blue cube next to the flat yellow circle and flat green leaf? Now turn the yellow circle into a sphere and replace the blue cube with a blue square.

Next, start creating visual images of whatever you are attempting to describe verbally. Here's my favorite: I like to think of mindfulness as a big house. Now, you can go up the front steps and knock on the front door. You will be greeted serenely and led into the living room, where people are meditating silently. You are welcome to join them.

Or, you can saunter around to the back door, step inside the kitchen, and immerse yourself in a completely sensual experience—the aroma of freshly-baked cookies, the sound of someone playing the guitar and someone else singing along, the moist warmth of the room, the vivid colors of the kitchen tiles and boldly painted walls, the taste of chocolate chips on your tongue, the intellectual stimulation of convivial conversation among those around the kitchen table, the movement as you dance with others who are swept up in the music, the hugs from strangers as you leave.

Same house. Different rooms. Very different experiences.

Question: Where would YOU rather hang out?

This puts my philosophy of mindfulness into an easily-imagined visual that anyone can conjure. I don't have to list bullet points or try to express the differences in any sort of structured way.

I can convey a feeling as well as information, and bringing sense elements into my "picture" stimulates all kinds of connections in the brain.

Coming up with word pictures like this is a fantastic way to tie your left/logic/language brain with your right/conceptual/creative brain. You don't really WANT to separate your brain, now do you? We need to hook up our right and left hemispheres in as many ways as possible. Linking language with visuals is the best method for doing this.

Be mindful of ways you might be keeping your language and visual imagery separate, and vow to help them get better acquainted.

#11 Draw Upside Down

If you think that you're terrible at drawing, you will be delighted to discover Dr. Betty Edwards and her remarkable program. Her book, ***Drawing On The Right Side of The Brain***, is a fantastic resource and the workbook that goes along with it is guaranteed to get you sketching—with a big grin on your face.

The approach is decidedly quirky—you look at a line drawing UPSIDE DOWN and draw what you see. When you turn it over, you won't believe how well you will have captured the essence of what you were copying!

Why? It seems that our left brain—the language side—is a bit of a thug. If you see a picture of a man's face and try to copy it, your brain jumps in with messages like “this is a nose” and “noses look like this” and it tends to get in the way of simply drawing what you see.

Our right creative side jumps in only when the left language side deems it too difficult to try to control. This is what happens when we try to use words to describe something challenging, like a spiral staircase. We give up and use gestures instead.

We WANT our left brain to give up, so by turning the picture upside down, the right brain has a chance to step in and shine.

To see some great before and after drawings done by regular folks who learned this technique during a five-day workshop, visit DrawRight.com

#12 Try Mind Mapping

I never take regular notes anymore, and I never use note cards for speeches or presentations. Why? I've discovered something much easier and more powerful.

It's the idea Tony Buzan described in *The Mind Map Book: How to Use Radiant Thinking to Maximize Your Brain's Untapped Potential*.

The concept of radiant thinking is based on the notion that we do not naturally put our ideas together in a linear way but organize them in a sort of circle around a central theme. Language itself is linear—we can only say or hear one word at a time—but if we use graphic representations of our thought processes, we can tap into our innate tendency to think in clusters of ideas that are connected by a theme.

With mind mapping, we start with a particular theme, question, or topic, and create a clockwise pattern of colorful graphic depictions of the various elements of it.

The advantage of this is its simplicity and its tendency to create more lasting mental images of ideas than simple words can convey. If you are preparing to give a speech, it is so much more effective to have one page with your central idea in the middle and your key points fanned out around it. You can see your main points, your opening and your

conclusion right on the same page—no need to flip through cards or pages, no more worrying about getting them out of order!

You don't have to present your information as a mind map—although I do recommend it because it knocks the socks off a typical PowerPoint presentation, which is linear by design. Instead of discussing one idea after another, mind mapping allows you to present ideas as relevant rays, and it visually connects the concepts in a clear way.

I use brightly colored pens and plenty of shapes and other graphics. You can use a mind map to plan a presentation, prepare for a party, make your holiday shopping list, or brainstorm about your business. It's clear and creative, and much easier to keep in your head than a long outline or pages of ideas.

Mind maps help you become more mindful about the way you think, and they allow you to take advantage of your natural inclination to sort ideas into various virtual piles. In addition, you will find that as you spend time coloring and designing your mind map, you are reminded of the creative power of using shape and color to enhance learning.

#13 See Red Spots

Try using a **red spot** as a trigger for mindfulness.

I frequently pass logos or signs that incorporate a red spot, so instead of seeing the Target logo, say, or the Japanese flag, I use the red spot as a reminder to say, "I am mindful."

We want to get in the habit of noticing something and then noticing that we have noticed it! In other words, we want to create a self-fulfilling statement. If we see a red spot and notice it, saying "I am mindful," then we are reinforcing our idea of ourselves as someone who pays attention. See it, say it, stamp it in your mind: "I am mindful."

Rather use a different color or shape? No problem. Just make sure it's one you are likely to see on a daily basis—if you're paying attention! Choose one that works best for you.

Why a logo? Because it's there! By using visuals that are unavoidable and "piggybacking" new mental triggers onto old ones, we can develop greater mindfulness and tweak our spatial awareness.

See Spot. See Red Spot. Go, Spot, Go!

I told you that you'd feel like a kid again!

#14 Celebrate the Mindful Mermaid

Speaking of logos, another one that I like to use is the Starbucks mermaid. I mean, it's everywhere, so it's a great reminder to pay attention and perfect to use as a trigger for a moment of mindfulness.

When you see the Starbucks logo—on a cup, on a sign, in an advertisement—simply think of that image as the Mindful Mermaid. Check in for a moment: where is your mind? At this particular moment, are you planning the future? Remembering the past? Relishing the present?

Just a few seconds of popping into mindfulness mode will help you recognize your ability to use spatial/visual intelligence to trigger awareness—and vice versa! Use the Mindful Mermaid as your secret reminder to catch yourself being present.

#15 Think “Sweet”

Use your spatial intelligence to create a trigger for a sense experience. By choosing a certain visual image and using it as your cue, you can build a stronger connection between what you see and what you taste.

A simple way to do that is to notice sugar. I don't mean the sugar that's in everything from candy to toothpaste—I've referring to sugar that you can SEE.

Whenever you sit at a café or restaurant and see a bowl of sugar or a container of sugar packets, think “sweet” by simply conjuring the taste of sweetness on your tongue. Can you taste it without actually using it?

The truth is that you CAN. This is a very powerful skill, and one that is used by hypnotherapists who work with those dealing with challenging eating issues.

We can create that taste of sweetness in our brains without actually dumping sugar into our food or beverage. Develop this skill, and you will become much more mindful of every sweet mouthful that you DO eat!

When you see sugar, think “sweet” and connect your tongue to your brain. Think of the calories and cavities you could avoid by using mindfulness!

#16 Think “Feet”

One last logo....

Every day, on the way to my office, I drive past the Nike World Headquarters campus. It's quite lovely, with a lush green area of shrubs and a series of cascading waterfalls along the entrance, which is marked in an understated way by a single red swoosh.

I use that swoosh as a reminder to be mindful of my feet, if only for a few seconds.

Athletes learn to scan their bodies mentally to check for aches, tight spots, and areas that feel warm. By using the Nike swoosh as a trigger, you can heighten your ability to pick out visual cues and zero in on a body part that is generally ignored.

You already have plenty of images that come to mind when you see that swoosh—advertisements you've seen, your own pair of shoes, a sport event that is sponsored by the company, or Phil Knight's face in the news. You are going to replace those other images with a brand new one.

Whenever you see and notice a Nike swoosh—on clothing, a pair of shoes, a shopping bag, an advertisement—think “feet” and pay attention to the sensations in your toes, arches, soles, and heels. Anything pinched? Are your feet warm or cold? Sweaty? Aching? Tired?

Use the ubiquitous swoosh to connect your vision to your feet, and develop greater awareness of what's going on at the OTHER end of your body!

Musical Intelligence (“music smart”)

Let's dispel a myth right now, shall we?

- 1) If you consider yourself a musician, don't think that you've already maxed out your musical intelligence. There's plenty of potential there.
- 2) If you definitely do not consider yourself a musician, don't think that you can't develop your musical intelligence.

In other words, no matter who you are, you need to read this part!

From commercial jingles to symphonic performances, from Muzak to your child's humming, we have endless opportunities to tune into music and to develop greater awareness through sound recognition. Those who have well-developed musical intelligence might have perfect pitch, but that isn't a requirement in any way. They may hum or sing phrases while coming up with some kind of solution to a problem. They might see or feel music intensely in a way that is visceral and deeply moving.

But most people listen to music for pleasure or sometimes find that a particular song phrase is running through their minds repeatedly. We can use music to inspire or soothe us, but we can also begin to see sound as a particularly effective trigger for mindfulness.

By listening FOR something instead of simply listening TO something, we are building a more extensive sound repertoire and creating a deeper understanding of how sound affects us.

Sound good?

#1 Tickle Your Mind's Ear

We already talked a bit about the mind's ear back in the linguistic intelligence section when you were encouraged to "hear" particular sounds such as your mother's voice saying your name.

You can tune your mind's ear by intentionally imagining certain sounds.

For example, you might try "hearing" the following:

"Happy Birthday" played with one finger on a piano
Rain falling on a metal roof
Wind blowing through leafy trees
Popcorn popping
Water filling a metal bucket
A handsaw cutting through a piece of wood

Someone writing with chalk on a blackboard
A static-filled radio station
Cymbals
Fingers snapping

Don't be afraid to get specific:

A shovel as it enters rich, soft soil
A shovel as it enters gravel
A shovel as it enters snow

What sounds are easy for you to hear with your mind's ear? Which sounds are harder to hear? Pay attention to what comes easily, but pay more attention to the ones that are difficult. If you can't hear it, chances are you've not been around that particular sound often enough for it to have anchored in your brain, or more likely, you've heard it before but never really listened.

Being able to create music or other sounds in your head is the key to developing this type of intelligence, and the more mindful you are of the sounds you hear, the more skillful you will become in this area.

Play with it!

#2 Focus On Crescendos

In the language of music, a crescendo refers to a phrase or group of phrases that get progressively louder. We can use the crescendo as a trigger for mindfulness and a way to bring greater attention to the sounds around us.

Listen for crescendos in your day. It might be a sudden burst of traffic noise. It could be a gradual rise in the volume of conversation in a crowded room. It may be the birds singing outside your window, or laughter coming from the neighbor next door.

Sound is rarely constant—it changes in tone and volume continuously, and we tend to tune it out unless there is a change. For example, we might tune out traffic noise or the sound of a television but notice when it stops.

Pay attention to the crescendos in your day, and note the ones that were easy to detect. Once you get those down, start listening for more subtle crescendos—a cycle on your dishwasher, the wind in the trees, your cat's purring. Or, choose a particular type of crescendo—for example, just those that are created by machines, or only those created by animals, or

perhaps crescendos that are percussive (not just drums but sounds from machinery or woodpeckers) or smooth in tone.

Throw in a visual element by picturing the crescendo sign—a very elongated <. When you notice a crescendo, simply acknowledge it, be aware of its qualities, and picture the symbol in your head.

#3 Hear Footsteps

This is a fun way to listen to the sound of footsteps around you and to draw distinctions in tone, volume, and character.

What does it sound like when someone is wearing high heels? What do you hear when someone shuffles? Pay attention to squeaky shoes and creaky ankles. Listen to the sound of footsteps behind you and try to create a mental image of that person based on what you hear. Are your guesses accurate—or completely off the mark?

Bring your awareness to the sound of walking in the woods, on a boardwalk, down a carpeted hallway, or across a tile floor. What does this sound look like in your mind's eye?

No need to get paranoid about those footsteps behind you...unless, of course, you also hear a crescendo!

#4 Compose Your Day

You may have heard about the growing practice of “creating your day”—a process of waking up in the morning and visualizing the way you would like the day to progress.

We can do double duty here by COMPOSING our day as though it were a symphony, a rock song, or any other piece of music. Consider the high points that require your greatest energy as crescendos that build in intensity. Think of the more relaxing periods and visualize the music that would characterize them.

You can get richly detailed if you like, choosing instruments and even melodies. But there's no need to get specific—instead, you can develop your musical intelligence and your mindfulness by simply looking at the day as an entire musical composition with a range of sounds and evoking different emotions as the hours go by.

So...how do you want it to sound today? Compose it before you even get out of bed, and then ease into your musical day.

#5 Strengthen Your Voice

You don't have to be a professional speaker or singer to benefit from having a strong voice that is also elastic and expressive. Singers turn to professional voice coaches to help them learn how to maximize their vocal power, and one of the top choices for those in the music industry is Renee Grant-Williams.

In her book, ***Voice Power: Using Your Voice to Captivate, Persuade, and Command Attention***, she offers some great tips for bringing more awareness to your own voice and zeroing in on subtle changes you can make that will dramatically affect the way your voice is heard by others.

Her book is terrific, and you can use her techniques in all kinds of settings, from phone sales to those heartfelt talks with your teenagers. She offers free articles and other resources on her website at MyVoiceCoach.com

Of course, another great option is to take voice lessons locally or to hire a voice coach to give you some tips that are relevant for your particular needs.

The result? Not only will you create a stronger voice, you will develop greater awareness of the voices you hear and the way we use our unique sound to express ourselves.

#6 Listen To Jingles

You don't really have to try hard to hear jingles—they are coming at you from radio and television throughout the day. Marketers understand the power of sound to build a strong connection in your brain to their particular product, and they test their jingles to see what people like before launching their little ditties into the world.

But LISTENING to jingles is not quite the same as simply hearing them. Again, it is a matter of listening FOR something, not just listening TO something.

Listen to the radio for a couple of hours and note how many jingles you hear—including the ones for the radio station itself! An hour later, which ones do you remember? Which ones can you “hear” in your head most clearly? Are both the words and the music easy to remember?

Pay extra attention to the jingles that you find annoying. Are you irritated because you don't like the product? Are you annoyed because the lyrics are insipid? Do you hate it because you hear it way too often?

If you can't get a jingle out of your head, it's doing its job. Still, it's YOUR head, so you can learn from noticing what sticks there, and use even the most annoying jingle as a mindfulness trigger to pay attention to the number of musical messages your brain is absorbing every day.

Pick your least favorite jingle and use it as your personal cue. Overlay your own message whenever you hear it. For example, if that annoying mattress commercial keeps coming at you, take note and instead of cringing, consider it your opportunity to stretch as though you were first waking up in the morning.

If the used car commercial makes you clench your fists, use it as your signal to relax your hands. You might actually look forward to hearing it!

Someone went to a lot of effort to create that jingle so that it will get your attention, so you might as well have the last laugh and use it for your own purposes. Develop your awareness of jingles and be creative about the ways you can turn them into your own little mindfulness games.

#7 Pick An Instrument

Well, it's always fun to learn to play a new instrument, but the next best thing is learning how to hear that instrument's sound.

Flute? Harp? Dulcimer? Bongos? Choose one you like and get good at hearing it. Listen to recordings of that instrument only and then develop your ability to discern its particular tones when it is played in an arrangement with other instruments.

Sound quality is a curious thing to try to describe. A middle C played on a flute does not sound the same as a middle C played on a dulcimer. By developing an ear for these tonal variations, we are deepening our mind's understanding of music in general and creating greater awareness of the rich diversity of sounds that surround us.

#8 Be Perfectly Wrong

Think about a child learning to play a musical instrument. She plays plenty of wrong notes, but that is part of an engaging and exciting process—though it might be particularly trying for her parents!

In his open-hearted and refreshing book, *The Perfect Wrong Note: Learning To Trust Your Musical Self*, price-winning pianist and noted

educator William Westney explains that playing a wrong note can be a perfect event: constructive, useful, and even enlightening. He offers some delightful strategies for lifelong learning and suggests significant changes in the way music is taught.

If you've been longing to pick up an instrument that you played years ago, or if you're itching to try learning a new instrument, you must read this book!

Westney is the creator of an acclaimed learning session referred to as "The UnMaster Class" in which he turns traditional master class approaches upside and elevates mistakes as magnificent opportunities for mindfulness.

To learn more, visit WilliamWestney.com.

#9 Introduce Your Mind's Ear and Mind's Eye

We can use the mind's eye in a visual/musical way by "seeing" sounds. Children often refer to sounds as "jumpy" or "black" or "colorful"—they have a less formidable barrier between sight and sound. Unfortunately, we tend to compartmentalize these senses as we get older, but we still maintain the ability to "see" sounds as various shapes, colors and textures.

Introduce your mind's ear and your mind's eye by paying attention to what you "see" when you hear particular sounds. What textures, colors, shapes, and shadows appear in your mind when you hear a foghorn? A hummingbird? A whistling tea kettle?

Move beyond the obvious—don't just picture a hummingbird, for example. Conjure the sound when you are nowhere near a hummingbird, and take note of what pops into your mind.

Check for color, shape, shadow, and formless qualities such as speed or emotion.

Most people find that they have always had a certain mental image that appears when they hear a particular sound, but never realized it until they started "looking" to see if they had any!

Deepen your visual and musical connections by becoming aware of the way your beautiful brain has created its own symbols for sound, and

you'll strengthen your awareness of subtle triggers that you may have completely ignored since you were a child.

#10 Chant

You don't have to do this in any sort of mystical way, and you don't even have to do it out loud.

The point is to get familiar with the sound of your own voice in your head as you say certain phrases.

Oh, and there's another point: your brain believes whatever you tell it, and it is especially thirsty for things you say in present tense.

So, pick a statement you would like to be true, and say it as though it is true right now.

"There is plenty of time."

"I am calm and relaxed."

"I remember to buy milk."

The rhythmic chant of any phrase in your head is automatically calming, but the particular message you select can create powerful results. I like to think of this as voodoo neuroscience—it seems a bit like casting a spell, but the reality is that the brain is MOST receptive to the messages we create and repeat about ourselves and our world.

Magic....or science?

Magic is simply science that is not yet understood, so why waste time and energy doubting something that has been shown to be effective in repeated studies? Just because we are not clear about WHY it works doesn't mean it DOESN'T work!

So, pick your statement, and in a rhythmic inner chant that you hear (and saying it out loud is extra effective), just keep it running. Slowing it down will create a greater sense of focus—speeding it up will create a bit more urgency. What is your intention? A very short-term need—buying milk—could benefit from a brief but perky repetition of your "I remember to buy milk" phrase.

Notice that I didn't say, "I won't forget to buy milk"—we want to keep this positive so that there is no chance your brain will latch on to the "forget" part! You want your brain to absorb three parts of this message:

- *remember
- *buy milk
- *true, present tense statement

Come up with your own phrases and remember to chant slowly for focus, quickly for urgency.

#11 Say It In A Song

We learned the alphabet by singing it, and we can develop our musical intelligence by continually using melody to enhance memory and learning.

Whether it's your grocery list or your meeting agenda, match it with a melody and sing it in your head. You don't need to be a composer—just use whatever tune comes to mind.

We can use melody to remember, but we can also use it as a trigger to generate a particular mind state. One that I like to teach my clients is the “Ch-Ch-Chain of Hearts” song.

Whenever we are feeling frustrated during a conversation with someone and start in with the “She always does this” repetitive talk in our heads, we can use this little game to keep the focus on our compassion instead of letting it slip toward anger or resentment.

I use Aretha Franklin's “Chain of Fools” song and switch the lyrics to “Chain of Hearts”. It's as though you have a long chain of cut-out hearts, a valentine if you will, that stretches from your heart to theirs.

When that frustration kicks in, visualize that chain of hearts coming from your chest and attaching to theirs. In your head, you're singin' like Aretha: “Ch-Ch-Chay-ay-ay-ay-ain.....Chain of He-arts....”

It takes, what, maybe ten seconds? And as silly as it might seem, it is a remarkably effective way to zero in on what you WANT to feel—compassion, affection, understanding.

Some clients use this at work with their colleagues, but most find this especially effective when dealing with their loved ones at home.

After all, you DO love this person, and you DO want to connect with them in a meaningful way despite your momentary irritation. By using melody as a trigger and focusing on a visualization of that chain of

hearts, you are tying your musical intelligence and spatial intelligence in a beautiful package that reinforces your interpersonal learning as well.

Think of it as musical multi-tasking, and come up with your own songs that work perfectly for you. You might even have a song for each person with whom you are building a stronger relationship, sort of like a theme song.

They'll never know you're singing in your head, but they will certainly feel your focus on what matters most—your ability to see them as a human in need of your patience, compassion and affection.

Start using songs as your secret for greater mindfulness!

#12 Start Seeing Ears

Remember that we want to stimulate connections between our various multiple intelligences whenever possible, so here's a way to connect your spatial awareness with your musical intelligence.

Notice ears.

Whenever you notice someone's ear, think "hear" and pay attention to the sounds around you. Is there any background music? What is the rhythm that you hear—footsteps, machinery, raindrops? Are you listening to one voice? Is it high, low, smooth, gravelly?

It only takes a few seconds, but it's a great cue to trigger mindfulness of the sounds you hear.

See an ear, and think "hear"—but don't go crazy on this one. No need to get obsessed with ears! Someone's earring might draw your attention, and that's enough for a cue. A couple of times a day works well for this, so if you want to get specific, choose to notice ears with, say, big hoop earrings as your particular ear of choice. Multiple piercings might work for you, or even unusually large ears or ones that stick out.

This is your secret trigger, so be discreet—no staring allowed!

#13 Humming and Ahhhing

Develop your ability to notice particular vocal sounds in conversation.

Focus on "Hmmm" or "Ahhh" as your target sound. You will be amazed how often you hear these!

No need to do anything—simply note the sound. Don't let it distract you from the conversation. This is an opportunity to notice flow without changing it (more about this when we talk about the thought parade later).

Once you start noticing your chosen sound, it might start to annoy you! If that happens, simply select a different one. “Um” or “like” or filler words like “however” or even a particular sound like the clicking of a tongue or whistling through the teeth.

Again, see if you can do this without getting annoyed or distracted. Practice noting the sound and letting go of it as the conversation continues.

This sounds easy, but it is a very pure quality of mindfulness—noting without judging—that allows us to see the world without getting caught up in it.

Playing this simple mindfulness game with yourself will create greater awareness of language, sound—and your own threshold for repetition.

Enjoy!

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (“body smart”)

For all the talk these days about the mind-body connection, there remains a definite division for most people between what they sense through their bodies and how they feel and process information in their brains. More pronounced still is our tendency to think of people as either “active” types or “intellectual” types.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence refers to our **awareness of and participation in intentional physical activity** of all kinds—knitting, washing dishes, throwing a javelin, running a marathon, square dancing, nursing a baby, or any other movement or position that requires purposeful bodily motion.

It is not limited to the type of activity reserved for elite athletes. In fact, let’s just say right now that **if you have a body, you are an athlete**, and that’s the starting point for every one of us.

The next concept to embrace is that **there is no need to become skilled at every type of physical activity** in order to develop bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

An auto mechanic or a concert pianist? A ceramic artist or a lab technician? A yoga instructor or an electrician? A gardener or a calligrapher? A dancer or a wrestler?

From artists to construction workers—and one could argue that these require a similar combination of spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence—we use our bodies in a variety of ways, and **there is no hierarchy** in terms of what activity is more desirable as a vehicle for physical development.

No matter what your interests may be, there are skills you can develop that enhance your bodily-kinesthetic intelligence while developing greater mindfulness of your body and its capabilities.

Our culture tends to place the greatest emphasis on **strength** and **endurance**, but around the world, other aspects of physical development are held in higher regard, such as **flexibility, balance, dexterity, coordination, expressiveness**, and good **reflexes**.

Let’s take a look at several ways we can flex our physicality while enhancing our awareness.

#1 Scratch Your Back

Sure, it’s nice to have someone else scratch your back, but one of the physical qualities we tend to lose as we get older is our ability to twist

our arms behind our backs, so here's a great way to check your flexibility while stimulating your circulation!

Simply reach around as best you can and try to scratch every square inch of your back using only your two index fingers. Have you missed a spot? Can you feel where that is? Can you visualize your back and "see" the areas that are hardest to reach?

What's the most natural way for you to reach the middle of your back—by stretching your arm up, elbow bent, and reaching DOWN your spine, or by sliding your arm behind you and UP your spine?

Ideally, you should be able to reach every square inch of your entire body. How close can you get to this ideal? How close can you get to this ideal while standing? While sitting? While lying face down?

My grandmother always said that the key to living well as we get older is to maintain a flexible spine and a flexible mind. Let's tie "flexible" and "spine" together with "mind" and focus on back scratching as a way to remind ourselves of the importance of being mindful of reaching—even when it's difficult.

#2 Propel Yourself

How many different ways can you use your body to propel yourself forward? Walking, running, skipping—sure. But get a little creative here.

Can you slide forward on a smooth floor by just pushing with your hands?

Can you slide forward by inching along on your rear end?

Can you pull yourself forward from a face-down position using your arms only?

Can you push yourself forward from a face-down position using your toes only?

One of the most fascinating—and entertaining—ways to learn about body propulsion is by watching infants as they start to discover their ability to move. It isn't always a linear progression from rolling over to sitting to crawling to walking! There's a wide range of scooting, pulling, pushing, rocking and sliding.

As infants, we tested all kinds of possibilities before we became skilled at walking. As adults, we often lose touch with the abilities we have to move our bodies in a variety of ways.

Get down on the floor and play around with propulsion. See how you can move WITHOUT walking, and be mindful of the muscles you can use to propel your body in interesting ways.

Got kids or grandkids? Nieces, nephews or neighbors? Get down and play. You can learn a thing or two about movement from those who spend all their time on the floor!

#3 Try Imaginary Manipulation

One of the things we're learning about human potential is that there is a tremendous link between **what we imagine we can do** and **what we CAN do**.

Physical therapists and sports trainers are zeroing in on the power of visualization to enhance performance. New technology has made it possible to see what is going on in the brain when we engage in a particular activity as well as what's lighting up when we visualize ourselves engaging in that particular activity.

Guess what? It's a remarkably similar brain pattern, whether we're actually doing it or just thinking about doing it.

Repetition of a physical skill can certainly help us improve, but it is empowering to know that IMAGINING OURSELVES performing that particular skill flawlessly can aid our learning process as well.

When you try this with very small, ordinary movements, you can strengthen the connection between your body's sensation of a particular activity and your brain's perception of it.

Let's start by focusing on small motions of the hand.

Imagine yourself holding a certain object. Just sit with your hand in your lap, palm up, and visualize holding:

***an apple**

***a pencil**

***a leaf**

***a stone**

- *a glass of water
- *your parent's hand
- *your phone

Try to sense what it feels like to:

- *open your front door
- *start your car
- *rinse a coffee cup
- *peel a carrot
- *pull a weed
- *thread a needle
- *pick up a grain of rice with a pair of tweezers
- *rub lotion on your face
- *open a jar
- *snap your fingers

You don't need to focus on every one of these—this is just a list of ideas. It may be helpful for you to start by imagining engaging in an activity that you enjoy immensely and then play with your own list of activities, ending with an action that you think of as difficult.

Our hands have a remarkable memory for motion, and we can enhance our brain's connection with movement by visualizing ourselves performing and improving in any action that requires dexterity.

This is especially intriguing for those who suffer from pain due to arthritis or carpal tunnel syndrome. Our intention is to maintain our hand's memory even though we may be limiting our actual movement.

Play with your hands!

#4 Live Large

The same kind of visualization game can be done using our **large muscle groups**. Instead of focusing on small movements of the hand, try imagining full body motion.

What does it feel like to throw a ping pong ball? To throw a baseball? To throw a basketball? To throw a large exercise ball? To throw a shotput?

Can you feel how the different size and weight of the balls affects your entire body as you pull back and then throw the ball forward?

Picture yourself riding a bicycle. What does it feel like to ride uphill? To ride downhill? To ride around a sharp curve? To ride on a gravel road? To ride as fast as you can?

Feel the motion of sliding on your feet, either on roller skates, rollerblades, or ice skates. Imagine the swinging of your arms as you go faster. Sense the back-and-forth rhythm of your legs as they push out to the sides.

Now, try to imagine a motion that you have not performed lately but did when you were younger. Skateboarding? Surfing? Rowing? Weightlifting? Doing a cartwheel? Hanging upside down? Pushing a wheelbarrow? Riding a scooter? Walking on your hands? Going down a slide?

If you've done it, your body has a memory of it. If you have not done it, you can create a sort of virtual memory by imagining how it would feel to engage in that activity.

Go ahead—be a ballerina or an acrobat or a football player—if only in your head. Pay attention to the muscles you feel during your imaginary pirouettes, flips, and touchdowns.

Your body wants to play!

#5 Explore Fun Forms

Whether there's an activity you want to participate in again after many years or one you've always wanted to try, you can find something that sparks creativity, mindfulness and body smarts.

Don't think of it as something you have to do exceedingly well—that's the biggest mistake we make when starting any new activity. It's okay to be lousy at it when you're starting, and there's never a need to become a star. Choose something that, by its very nature, is playful.

You could decide to try skiing, say, but why not try snowshoeing instead? Try to step away from anything that requires a great deal of investment in time, energy and money, and focus on something you can attempt fairly spontaneously and develop enough skill in initially to have a good time on your first outing.

You can take a single salsa lesson for 30 minutes and get out on the dance floor and have a great time.

You might sign up for lessons at a local facility for a sport like pickle ball or ping pong and develop enough skill in just a few short sessions to play actively and really enjoy yourself.

The point is not to be competitive—instead, focus on what you are doing for your body and how you can use this new skill to facilitate greater awareness of movement, muscles, flexibility, balance, coordination, and reflexes.

Keep it light. Go to a local toy store and pick up a hula hoop, just for fun. You might even take up an activity like hooping, which uses weighted hoops in a combination of rhythm and coordination that looks a whole lot like playing. For more info, visit Hooping.org.

#6 Seek Moving Inspiration

Although all of us use our bodies to gain information about the outside world, many people are actually more likely to be inspired while they are engaged in a physical activity.

Running, walking, cycling, swimming, sweeping, raking, mowing, weeding, washing dishes, vacuuming—any repetitive physical activity can be a catalyst for greater mindfulness and creative problem-solving.

The trick is to expand your view of what “physical activity” means to you, and look at the most mundane tasks as opportunities for awareness and even epiphanies.

Many mindfulness approaches use such things as eating, walking or breathing as focus activities, but let’s take that a step further. Instead of focusing intently and intensely on each bite we chew or every breath we take, we can broaden our concept of mindfulness to embrace creative processes that emerge while we are in motion.

In other words, you can choose to focus on the back and forth motion of your arms as you swim your laps in order to develop greater mindfulness, but you can also simply allow your mind to engage in creative problem-solving while you are in motion.

“Mind watching body” is just one way to use motion to develop bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. As we’ve seen, we can choose to recreate the sensation of motion without moving, and we can also decide to take advantage of our increased blood circulation and oxygen supply during physical activity to engage our minds in a less directed way.

Our minds actually benefit from this type of mental rest during which we are not actively solving a problem but instead let things sort of percolate while we are engaged in a less intellectual pursuit.

The important point is to avoid considering physical activity as being effective in terms of mindfulness ONLY when we are focusing on that moment's motion. The truth is that by viewing our bodies as vehicles for mindfulness, we can tweak the temporal issue (tissue?) a bit. We are likely to gain clarity about a particular issue not when we doggedly pursue it but when we ease back a bit and give it a little space. Your "A-ha!" moment is not something to be scheduled, but you must provide the room in your schedule for it to appear.

Use physical activity as a space-maker for mindfulness and focus less on making something happen.

#7 Learn The Alexander Technique

The Alexander Technique is a notoriously difficult concept to explain, so I'm not even going to try. Suffice it to say that it isn't yoga, it isn't stretching, it isn't any prescribed type of movement—instead, it's an approach that focuses on creating a greater awareness of how we move our bodies.

This technique has been shown to be highly effective for those dealing with chronic pain due to repetitive stress injuries, but it's also extremely valuable for anyone who has a body!

There are a couple of outstanding books on the Alexander Technique that I recommend. One is by Michael J. Gelb, and it's called ***Body Learning: An Introduction to the Alexander Technique***. It offers a thorough description of the development of this approach.

Another is by Glynn MacDonald and Glenn MacDonald, and the title is ***The Complete Illustrated Guide to the Alexander Technique: A Practical Program for Health, Poise and Fitness***. It's a beautiful book that will help you understand how your body moves and how you can make subtle changes to greatly increase your comfort and move more effectively.

There are AT instructors all over the world, and you can find one near you by visiting the Alexander Technique International website at ati-net.com.

#8 Play With Nia

Nia started as a non-impact aerobics approach incorporating dance, yoga, tai chi, and the Alexander Technique. It has evolved over the last 25 years as a fitness technique that focuses on developing strength, endurance, flexibility and expressiveness while doing what feels like dancing around in your living room.

Nia is done in your bare feet so that you can literally get in touch with the sensation of your feet on the floor. The movements to music are alternately slow and fast, delicate and bold, with plenty of room for personal interpretation and lots of encouragement to simply have fun.

Carlos Rosas and Debbie Rosas developed Nia, and I was fortunate enough to be trained as a Nia instructor a number of years ago by both of them. They have trained hundreds of teachers who are now offering Nia classes in settings around the world.

I highly recommend Nia as a fun workout, but more important is its role in training the mind to be aware of the body. It's a terrific way to develop your bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and you don't need any particular talent to do it—just a body and a willingness to explore movement.

To learn more, visit Nia-Nia.com

#9 Develop a Secret Kinesthetic Vocabulary

We often refer to the kinesthetic body as the “dream” body—it encompasses the phantom sensations we feel when we are imagining a physical activity without actually doing it, such as in the visualization process we used to “picture” ourselves holding an apple.

One way to strengthen the connection between our linguistic intelligence and our bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is to **use certain words as a trigger for awareness of our kinesthetic body.**

For example, when we hear the word “fist” we focus on the sensation of making a fist without actually doing so. We might choose the word “toes” to use as a trigger to imagine the sensation of standing on our toes.

Some other words that work well as part of your secret kinesthetic vocabulary are:

***Hand/Hands** (as in “Please hand me the....” or “Can you give me a hand...” in addition to literal uses of the word, like “She shook my hand.”)

***Foot/Feet** (as in “Who will foot the bill for this?” or “He put his foot in his mouth” or “The groom got cold feet.”)

***Back** (as in “I’ve got your back” or “He’s always on my back” or “My back was against the wall.”)

***Shoulder** (as in “She gave me the cold shoulder” or “We were standing shoulder to shoulder”)

***Leg** (as in “He’s got a leg up in this competition” or “I’ll take the last leg of the trade show” or “He hasn’t got a leg to stand on.”)

Whenever you hear your selected secret word in casual conversation, simply spend five seconds zeroing in on the sensations in that body part and “flex” it without actually moving it.

This works in two ways: you are training yourself to isolate and **recognize your key body word**, and then **using it as a reminder** to reinforce your bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

You can also choose body parts that aren’t so easily flexed, such as your nose, ear, or eye. Instead of doing the virtual flex, you can focus instead on simply drawing your awareness to that part. Feel your nose, your ear or your eye and notice any sensations of warmth, irritation, air, etc.

By practicing this, you can develop greater mindfulness of your body while it is relatively still but **you do not need to sit still** in order to focus your attention.

Why only five seconds? Because you want to become skillful at popping in and out of mindfulness mode throughout the day so that it is no longer something you do only when you have set aside a period of silent, solitary time! Mindfulness is available, enjoyable, and tangible throughout your day, and all you have to do is remember to “go there” even if it’s only a few seconds at a time.

Of course, what’s great about this is that it makes mindfulness seem easy and fun, and you’re likely to WANT to spend more time with these little games!

Remember, you don’t need to choose a long list of secret body words. Just start with a couple and build from there.

Leave ’em wanting more, I always say!

#10 Volunteer as a Language Teacher

What does teaching language have to do with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence? A whole lot, it turns out.

When we are trying to communicate with someone who knows very little of our language, we end up using gestures to communicate. Now, some people use gestures all the time in conversation, using their hands in a very expressive way to enhance their communication.

But even those who consider themselves to be very skilled at using the body will find that communicating with someone using only very basic language can be quite challenging! The beauty of teaching basic language skills is that it will result in the development and awareness of a whole range of gestures you might never use in normal conversation.

Your gestures are not the only focus for those watching you, so you're not likely to feel as self-conscious as you might while playing a game of charades. Instead, you are likely to be so caught up in communicating your concept to this one person that you skip right over any feelings of embarrassment or hesitation and just plow ahead toward greater understanding.

Best of all, there's instant gratification—when they get it, you can share a moment of celebration!

Helping someone learn a language is a terrific way to develop greater bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and you'll find yourself becoming more aware of the gestures you use as well as those used by others you encounter every day. You'll also discover all kinds of cultural differences in the way we use our hands to express our emotions!

#11 Listen For “Shhh”

Because we want to build connections between our various intelligences, it's beneficial to pay attention to sounds that we can use as triggers for body awareness.

Use the “Shhh” sound as a reminder to check your shoulders. Whenever you hear someone say “Shhh” to quiet others or as a sound of exasperation (just short of swearing!), check your shoulders.

Scan for tension or tightness. Do a shoulder roll or shoulder shrug to stretch your muscles.

Tie “Shhh” with “shoulder” in your brain, and you'll have a built-in reminder to stretch and relax.

#12 Touch Your Funny Bone

Another way to connect your bodily and musical intelligences is to engage your funny bone.

We refer to our elbow joint as our funny bone because it involves the bone from our shoulder to our elbow—the humerus. We see the similarity between this word and humorous, which of course means funny.

Let's play with this by intentionally connecting our elbow to laughter. When you are laughing hard, you automatically double over as you exhale. As you do this, grab your elbow—your hand is there naturally, so you might do this already!

But we're going to be purposeful about linking the funny bone to something funny, so that you begin to use it as a cue for humor.

Don't think this works? You'll be surprised! Once you start touching your elbow intentionally whenever you laugh hard, you will create a memory connection with that part of your body. Later, when you simply touch your elbow, it will remind you of your funniest moments. You will find yourself smiling!

Isn't it fun to know that you have a source of humor right there on your arm? Use it!

#13 Target Toes...Or Whatever

Use toes as a trigger for body awareness. Whenever you see someone standing on their toes, stretch yours. Simple, huh? (Note: Don't try this one during a dance concert!)

This doesn't have to be complicated in any way. There's no need to think that strengthening your body/brain connection has to be hard. Forget the "no pain, no gain" mantra, and opt for the simplicity of paying attention to particular parts of your body whenever you note your own secret trigger.

Pick whatever you like: Knees? Ankles? Pinky finger? Nobody needs to know what it is, so feel free to get a little more intimate if it gets you motivated!

There is no goal other than dialing into your body regularly and using your own special secret cue as a reminder.

Naturalistic Intelligence ("nature smart")

The newest intelligence on the block, naturalistic intelligence refers to one's ability to recognize, understand, and connect with the natural environment. This could refer to a talent for creating a wonderful landscape, or a particular gift for working with animals, or even a pronounced tendency to be inspired by nature.

Meteorologists, veterinarians, horticulturists, bird watchers, beekeepers, gardeners, pet-owners—there are many ways to manifest our naturalistic intelligence. Whether your connection with natural elements shows up in your work or your leisure, the important thing to remember is that we can enhance our understanding of the flora, fauna, and formations of our world by engaging in a variety of activities of our choice.

Young children are natural-born naturalists. We have a great sense of wonder about the world around us, and chances are you had your favorite specialty when you were younger.

Butterflies? Birds? Snakes? Cats? Leaves? Flowers? Pine cones? Many of the most universally joyful experiences of childhood are centered around nature, such as staring at the changing cloud formations, climbing trees, picking flowers, and keeping pets.

As our world becomes more urbanized, it is increasingly difficult to remain connected to nature, but it is also vitally important for our wellbeing and the health of our ecosystems to engage in activities that help us develop our naturalistic intelligence.

You don't have to be an environmentalist to be naturalistically intelligent—but you're likely to become one as you deepen your connection to the natural world around you.

It's only natural.

One of the best aspects of naturalistic intelligence is that it lends itself beautifully to pairing with other intelligence boosters. Here are a few ways to become more mindful using nature as your glorious tool.

#1 Keep A Nature Journal

There's nothing like observing in order to write or draw to encourage greater awareness of nature. Grab a notebook and sit someplace you find inspiring—it could be a national park, a community garden, or your own backyard.

Select an intriguing feature—the slope of a flower bed, the plantings around a bench, a knot in a tree, a cluster of boulders—and note every salient feature. Describe it with words, draw a picture of it, paint it, whatever.

An outstanding book that will really inspire you is Claire Walker Leslie's *Keeping A Nature Journal: Discover A Whole New Way of Seeing The World Around You*.

#2 Start Seeing Nature In The City

Don't think you can't play with your naturalistic intelligence if you happen to live in the city!

In any urban environment, there are plenty of natural elements that can serve as a focus for greater mindfulness. It's helpful to remember that stone and wood, not to mention sky and water, are terrific focal points for sparking your connection to nature.

Pick a particular tree, planting, or vacant lot to notice—something you are likely to pass on a regular basis. Even the most ordinary parking lot is likely to have a natural element worth noticing. Your challenge is to find the sublime in the so-so.

A book that will inspire you to do just that is John Tallmadge's *The Cincinnati Arch: Learning From Nature In the City*. It's amazing what you can see if you look down...or look up!

Shift your perspective on what nature looks like, and find it wherever you are.

#3 Add Natural Elements To Your Environment

Collect seashells and keep them in a jar. Gather leaves, pine cones, interesting rocks, or other items and display them in a basket or tray on a coffee table.

Start surrounding yourself with as many textures and colors from the natural world as possible. No need to spend money on fancy prints or huge sculptures—keep your elements simple and pure.

Ask yourself this: would you have found this item interesting when you were a child? If so, pick it up and keep it around for a while. Hold it, gaze at it, play with it.

Let yourself become fascinated again, and select one favorite piece to use as a trigger to become calm or focused. Keep it in your pocket or on your desk, and pick it up when you need a reminder to be aware of the present instead of worrying about the future.

My favorite? I have a small fossil that I keep on my desk. It's a great reminder of the immensity of time, and it helps me feel calm whenever I get caught up in a sense of urgency about a particular project.

#4 Develop Your Virtual Sense of Smell

What are your favorite scents from the natural world?

***the smell of the air right before a thunderstorm**

***a rose in bloom**

***honeysuckle**

***the ocean breeze**

***freshly cut grass**

***a forest**

***rich, dark garden soil**

***a meadow in spring**

Your favorite natural scent memory repertoire comes from your own unique combination of the places you've visited during your life. You may be far away from the original sources of your favorite scent memories, but that doesn't mean you can't conjure them at will!

Focus on a particular scent memory from nature and recreate it in your mind. What does it smell like? What comes to mind when you picture it? What emotion does it evoke? What memories are attached to it?

Just as we want to continue to have sense experiences of our hands even when we are limiting our actual movement, we need to continue to develop and reinforce our sense of smell by engaging in these mindfulness activities.

Remember that smelling a rose that is right in front of you and skillfully recalling the scent of that rose later results in the same activity in the brain!

There are two results that you are likely to experience by developing your virtual sense of smell: you will become more aware of the scents you

enjoy, and you will find yourself paying closer attention to various smells in order to be able to accurately re-experience them later.

You might even find that you develop greater appreciation for the smells you aren't particularly fond of once you "open your nose" to the natural world around you!

#5 Develop A Sense of Place

One of the ways to connect more meaningfully with your natural surroundings is to be intentional about learning more about your particular setting.

You can visit a local botanical garden or community garden, visit a natural history museum, get a book on your local area's flora and fauna or join a group that is immersed in learning about a certain aspect of nature, such as your local Audubon Society chapter or a club that maintains native plantings.

I've been fortunate to become involved with an outstanding organization based in Portland, Oregon called the **Northwest Earth Institute**. For over ten years, NWEI has been providing materials for small groups—in homes, workplaces, and centers of faith—to use in discussions encouraging exploration of values, beliefs and habits regarding the earth.

Although the readings themselves are fascinating, the greatest benefit from participating in a discussion course is meeting others in your neighborhood who are also interested in deepening their understanding of their natural environment. In addition to the outstanding course on **Developing A Sense of Place**, NWEI offers stimulating courses on topics such as voluntary simplicity, sustainable choices, raising healthy children who are aware of the environment and their impact on it, and various aspects of globalization.

With courses offered in all fifty U.S. states, NWEI has helped over 60,000 people develop greater awareness and sparked tremendous growth in naturalistic intelligence in citizens of all ages.

To learn how to start or join a course near you, visit NWEI.org

#6 Build A Bridge Between Nature and Technology

In your own brain, that is!

Nature provides truly awe-inspiring examples of efficiency and design, and the best book to read on this topic is ***Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired By Nature*** by Janine M. Benyus.

You'll never look at a spider web the same way again!

Becoming more mindful of the ways in which nature provides energy, purifies water, and eliminates waste is a crucial step in understanding the task before us as multiply intelligent humans on a planet with limited resources.

#7 Talk To The Animals

If you have a pet, you already do this.

If not, look at ways you can develop a greater understanding of the animal world by studying the way they communicate.

As a college student, I spent a semester studying primates—Japanese macaques, to be exact—at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. I stood all day in the snow, jotting down the various behaviors of a group of macaques, and was delighted to discover their distinct personalities. In no time, I recognized all 18 of my “charges” and grew to see their various quirks and even cranky moods with great affection.

A few years later, I ended up living in a very isolated community in northern Japan, and was stunned to learn that the Japanese macaques were native to that area!! These local macaques did not receive me as a dear old friend, however. Still, I loved watching them—from a safe distance.

There is another Janine Benyus book I recommend. It's ***The Secret Language and Remarkable Behavior of Animals***. She looks at 20 different species around the world and offers a captivating look at their unique characteristics.

It's the next best thing to observing them!

#8 Watch Animal Shows

Oh, wait, I guess that's not true.

The next best thing to being there in the wild is not reading about these animals—it's watching them on television!

There are some wonderful programs on various networks that really capture the beauty and nobility of our friends in the animal kingdom.

You can learn a great deal about our animal friends by visiting AnimalPlanet.com, so bookmark it and check in regularly to help you develop a larger view of the richness and diversity of life.

There's a lot to enjoy in watching these shows, but you can also rent some extraordinary films about nature.

One I love is [Winged Migration](http://Sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html) (Sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html), with absolutely stunning photography of birds in flight.

#9 Watch Birds

No matter where you live, you've got some fascinating native species that are worth watching.

Join a local chapter of an organization like the [Audubon Society](http://Audubon.org) (Audubon.org) or the [Nature Conservancy](http://NatureConservancy.org) (NatureConservancy.org) and become actively engaged in the study and protection of the birds in your area.

In addition to strengthening your naturalistic intelligence, watching birds can be highly entertaining. Get a bird feeder and see what shows up in your own backyard.

Your feathered friends can bring you closer to a greater understanding of the concerns we share as species on this planet.

#10 Plant A Container Garden

Even if you live in a tiny apartment, you've probably got some place you can put a planter near a window or veranda so that you can get reacquainted with the wonder of growing plants.

You do remember that wonder, don't you? When you planted a little seed in a cup at school and watched it sprout over the course of a couple of weeks?

If you're an old hand at gardening, try planting something new to you. Find an interesting variety of your favorite vegetable and plant it in a pot near your kitchen window.

Remember a particular favorite scent from your past? Go to a nursery and pick up a plant or seeds. Bring the scent back into your life and reconnect to that olfactory pleasure.

Or plant an old favorite in a new color, or try a theme container: things that start with the letter T, perhaps?

Look for ways to explore nature in even the most ordinary ways.

#11 Picture Berries And Cherries

Always keep in mind that you want to give your intelligences a chance to be good buddies. This means you need to mix things up and introduce them to each other!

Here's a way to connect your naturalistic intelligence with your ability to pick out visual clues in the not-so-natural environment.

Use berries and cherries as a cue. Whenever you see a pictorial image of a berry—strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, huckleberries, gooseberries, etc.—or cherries, try to picture the plant.

You will see these in the grocery aisles wherever breakfast cereals, snack bars, or yogurt are displayed. If you see a graphic for a strawberry, picture the plant. What does it look like? How tall is it? What does it smell like? Where does it grow?

This takes only a few seconds, but what you are doing is creating a connection between the picture and your memory of the real thing. Don't focus on taste here—instead, you are visualizing the plant exactly the way that it grows.

We are getting more and more removed from our food sources, so this might be difficult for you if you've never seen certain kinds of berry vines or cherry trees. Look them up in a book or online if you have to—the important thing is to create a picture in your head of a real berry or cherry and how it grows.

Once you get the berries-and-cherries thing down, expand your repertoire. Try it with pineapples, mangoes, cantaloupes, watermelons, lemons, kiwi, or anything else. It's a fun way to spark a little research

(What does a mango tree look like? A papaya tree?) and connect the often cartoonish depictions of food with the natural source.

#12 Use Sneezes

Another way to deepen your naturalistic intelligence is to connect it with your bodily intelligence through your sense of smell.

Develop greater mindfulness of your environment by selecting a specific cue as your secret smell trigger. I've got a fun one for you: whenever someone sneezes.

Go ahead and say, "Gesundheit!" and then simply notice what you smell. This is an easy one to remember because chances are good that if someone has just sneezed, you are momentarily aware of what germs might be lurking in the air! You might be breathing more shallowly for a moment in an effort to avoid ingesting little nasties, so use this time to pay attention to what you can smell.

You might be in an office, but that doesn't mean there's no scent in the air. A banana? Coffee? The leftover aroma of someone's lunch in the microwave? A wet wool coat? Leather? New carpeting?

Take a few seconds to take a whiff. What do you smell that could be described as natural? What is man-made?

If you're outside, ask the same question. Natural scents—or those created with chemicals?

Use the sneeze as your trigger to get in touch with the smells that surround you, and you will find yourself becoming more mindful of the time you spend—or do not spend—exposed to the natural environment.

Interpersonal Intelligence ("people smart")

Interpersonal intelligence is nothing more—and nothing less—than the ability to understand people. Interpersonal intelligence is what allows us to recognize and distinguish among a vast array of intentions, motivations, moods, feelings and thoughts of other people.

"People smart" people tend to be comfortable in groups and love to make introductions. They have a natural ability to sense when someone is upset or uncomfortable, and are skilled at knowing what to do and what to say to put others at ease. They recognize subtle nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, personal space, posture, eye contact, and touching and use these cues to gain greater understanding of people in general and individuals in particular.

In short, "people smart" people know how to read people.

We can all improve our ability to connect with others in a more meaningful way, and we don't have to start throwing huge parties in order to do so! If you tend to feel uncomfortable in a social setting, here's some good news: you don't need to be wildly popular in order to gain intelligence in this area, and you can become more connected by being a better observer. No need to be the belle of the ball!

In fact, observing is absolutely key to developing your interpersonal intelligence. Here are a few ways to get started.

#1 Watch The "Withs"

At any social gathering, even in a public place where you are relatively anonymous, watch other people and try to determine the ways in which they are "with" others.

Obvious signs are couples holding hands, but seek more subtle cues to the way individuals may be connected. Notice when people shake hands. Are they being introduced for the first time, or are they meeting again after a previous introduction? How can you tell?

Watch when people walk side-to-side or talk face-to-face. How close are they standing to each other? What happens when they are joined by another person? How do their positions shift?

In watching the "withs," notice the way they pull away from each other—to talk to someone else, use the rest room, get a drink, etc.

Do they touch a shoulder? Do they whisper in the other's ear? Do they exchange facial expressions?

Heighten your awareness of "with" behavior, and you'll become more mindful of the way you express yourself when you are with others.

#2 Be Savvy About Terminal Markers

Well, this sounds quite dire, but a terminal marker is simply a behavior that indicates that it's time to leave. We've all known folks who linger far too long after dinner despite our exaggerated yawns and hints about the busy day tomorrow.

Pay attention to the way people show that it's time to leave a party or meeting, and watch closely to see what kind of body language they use.

What seems to be universally understood as a time-to-go move? What cues seem too subtle for most people to catch?

How do YOU indicate that it's time to end a meeting? How would you show your guests that you're ready to call it a night?

By paying attention to the ways we use terminal markers, you will become a savvy guest, host, and meeting facilitator. This is a skill that will ensure you get enough sleep or time to finish your project, so play with what works until you develop the perfect exit strategy.

#3 Look Right Between The Eyes

It's hard for some people to maintain good eye contact, but it is an important part of connecting with others.

The first step is noticing when you're not looking someone in the eye. What makes you look away? Are they standing too close to you? Are they gazing a bit too intensely into your eyes? What exactly is making you uncomfortable?

Sometimes shifting your posture helps or stepping to the side will prompt you to look into one eye more readily. Stepping back in a way that allows you to look at someone's whole face instead of closely into their eyes may make it easier to "lock in" during a conversation.

If you find yourself squirming and glancing around when talking to someone who seems to have laser beams boring into you, simply shift your focus to the area of the nose right between their eyes.

It's a lot easier to stare there than it is to flip from eye to eye when you're feeling uncomfortable.

Make it a game. Where can you look that helps you feel connected but not vulnerable?

If you must break contact, look up instead of around you. Most people interpret this as "thinking" behavior, so you'll be less likely to seem distracted and more likely to be viewed as someone who has been hit with a sudden inspiration!

Be aware of the times when you find it EASY to maintain good eye contact, and pay attention to the factors that contribute to that.

#4 Be Touched

Bring your attention to the ways others touch you during conversation.

Where do they make contact? Is it your shoulder? Your forearm? Your hand? Your leg?

What feels intimate? What feels inappropriate?

If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable with the way someone is touching you during a conversation, pay attention to exactly what is annoying to you—is their physical contact too heavy-handed? Too awkward? Too familiar? Too frequent? Too forced?

By looking at the way YOU feel when being touched, you will become more mindful of touch in general and more aware of the way others may interpret physical contact.

#5 Watch Your Listening

Some people listen in silence, while others are more actively involved in expressing their listening. Both can be effective.

What's YOUR listening style? Do you fill spaces with phrases like, "Wow" or "I see" or "You're kidding!" to convey that you are following along? Or are you more likely to listen silently as someone tells a story?

We tend to shift our own behavior depending on the style of the person we are listening to. A very vivacious speaker who gestures wildly and laughs loudly might elicit a different kind of listening behavior from us than someone who is a quiet, measured speaker who pauses frequently to consider what they will say next.

Watch your listening, and see if you change your style with different people. What is your preference? How do you like others to respond when listening to you?

Recognize your listening patterns and zero in on what characteristics you find appealing in those who seem to be paying attention to what you're saying.

#6 Learn How To Handle Difficult Conversations

If you're human, you're going to face challenging situations. One of the ways you can develop your interpersonal intelligence is to learn techniques to help you navigate those tricky conversations with your boss, your spouse, your friends, your kids and your clients.

If you feel unsure about dealing with touchy subjects, you're likely to avoid confrontation or pretend you're feeling okay when you're not. Although there are certainly times when it is appropriate to simply shrug off comments or actions that offend or hurt us, if we make this our general policy about conflict, we're likely to end up in Ulcer Land.

We can learn effective strategies for handling a variety of situations, and the book I recommend most is *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen, and Roger Fisher.

As a trained mediator, I recognize the value of learning how to separate our emotions from our positions and issues, and this book is a terrific tool for those who want to prepare for a tough talk as well as those who want to recognize and learn from past mistakes. Good stuff!

You will definitely become more mindful of the way you defend your opinions and present your concerns, and this will absolutely catapult you forward in the development of your interpersonal intelligence.

#7 Pick A Gesture To Observe

We use a lot of gestures, and you can glean valuable interpersonal information by directing your attention to the ways others use their hands while communicating.

Select a certain gesture, and make it your mission to notice whenever you see someone using it. Here are some suggestions:

- *nose scratching**
- *arms stretched overhead**
- *pounding on a table or other surface for emphasis**
- *snapping fingers**
- *hands on head**
- *palm on forehead**
- *hand on chest**
- *hands on hips (“arms akimbo”)**

Don't choose the whole list—pick only one. Now, whenever you see someone use this gesture, take note. What is their emotional state? Do you think they are aware that they are using this gesture? What information is being conveyed by this gesture?

You don't have to say a word about it. It's your special mission.

After you've watched several people making the same motion, you will start to see subtle differences in how and when they use this gesture. Pay attention, and you will develop greater mindfulness about how YOU use your gestures as well.

#8 Track Your Secret Gesture

One of the ways we can create greater awareness of our particular style of communication is to track a specific gesture of our own.

If you watch a selected gesture as described in the previous tip, you are likely to notice how some gestures seem to convey specific emotions and enhance communication.

Choose a gesture that you want to incorporate in order to feel a stronger connection to someone or to communicate more effectively. For example, you might choose a palm-up gesture to show openness, or a fist-in-palm gesture when making a point, or a thoughtful fingers-on-lips gesture, or a hand-on-shoulder gesture to show empathy.

Be mindful of using this secret gesture during your conversations, and pay attention to any response from others. Did it create clarity?

How do you know?

This is a simple but fascinating exercise, and it's surprising what you will discover by playing with your hands!

#9 Brainstorm For Others

One of the most effective ways to spark your interpersonal intelligence is to engage in brainstorming sessions with others with the specific intention of helping someone else.

We often have better ideas for others than we do for ourselves, and once we tap into that, we can create tremendous opportunities for growth, support, friendship and mentorship.

You've probably heard of mastermind groups—professional colleagues who gather regularly by phone or in person to honestly share their challenges and help others who are facing their own.

We are lifted up when we brainstorm for others. When our purest intention is to see someone overcome their difficulties and reach new heights in their professional and private lives, we are manifesting our interpersonal intelligence and skillfully connecting.

Be mindful of the suggestions you offer to others, and be aware of your pure intention in doing so. Focus on being kind and helpful, and you might just come away with an epiphany for yourself.

I've started a new thing called the **Mindful Pranksters Club**. It's for people anywhere who want to get together to come up with kind, playful, inspiring ways to enhance awareness and creativity in themselves and others in their community. I've got all kinds of tips, tricks and virtual high fives to get you started! Go to <http://www.Real-WorldMindfulness.com/mindful-pranksters.htm> to learn more.

#10 Learn To Speak Effectively

From [Toastmasters](http://Toastmasters.org) (Toastmasters.org) to the [National Storytelling Network](http://NationalStorytellingNetwork.org) (Storynet.org), there are plenty of ways to learn how to speak more expressively and share more vividly.

Join a local Toastmasters group in your area. Listen to books on tape to learn how various voice inflections can influence your experience of the story. Visit festivals featuring storytellers, subscribe to storytelling newsletters, and start by reading stories aloud to anyone who will listen. Volunteer at a local school or preschool, read to your own children or grandchildren, or visit someone who is in the hospital and would love to hear a story!

You don't ever have to become a professional storyteller or speaker, but by listening to those who are skilled at interpretative storytelling and expository speaking, you will learn a great deal about what connects a speaker with an audience.

Whether you have an audience of one or 1,000, creating more awareness of words, pauses, gestures, facial expressions, and voice control will contribute to your interpersonal intelligence.

#11 Practice the Ten-Second Rule

When you are with someone who is demanding your time and attention while you are busy or distracted by something else, practice the ten-second rule.

Drop whatever you are doing, and **commit to ten seconds of full-on attention with a laser-like focus** and complete, direct eye contact. Ten seconds is a very short time, but it is surprising how often that brief moment can fulfill the need for connection in someone who is asking for your attention.

If your child is saying, "Mommy, look, Mommy, do you see this?" it may be that, instead of really asking for a lot of your time, the demand is really just a request for reassurance. What happens when you focus for ten seconds? What can you convey in that time if you respond wholeheartedly? What reaction can you elicit by fully committing to ten seconds of attention?

I'm not saying that ten seconds is "quality time" and that you don't need to offer more than that. No. But there ARE times when the repeated request that you ignore is causing great uneasiness in a child and building irritation for you, and the ten-second rule can be an amazing "settler" that allows both of you to relax.

If you find yourself tuning someone out, nodding your head without listening, or saying "um-hmm" without really paying attention, check in. Offer ten seconds of laser focus, and see how that shifts the energy for both of you.

Building interpersonal intelligence requires developing awareness of the way others perceive you, so use the ten-second rule as a way to remember that you can skillfully reassure and connect with others in even the shortest moments.

Intrapersonal Intelligence ("self smart")

Intrapersonal intelligence is simply self-understanding. It relates to our ability to experience a wide range of feelings, our capacity to recognize and evaluate the way we respond to our experiences, and our inclination to develop greater understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

Those with highly developed intrapersonal intelligence are likely to enjoy spending time alone and derive pleasure from learning about themselves through intentional self-focused pursuits such as meditation, journaling, and attending workshops, trainings and retreats.

Introspection and contemplation can deepen self-understanding, but to develop a mindfulness practice that truly enhances intrapersonal intelligence, it is essential to incorporate elements that hold your interest and spark your creativity.

I highly recommend meditation as the optimal activity for developing self-understanding, and encourage everyone to try it.

However, it is important to keep in mind that engaging in all of the activities listed in this ebook so far will undoubtedly contribute to greater intrapersonal intelligence. You don't have to sit still to be self-smart, and you don't need to meditate to more skillfully assess your particular gifts and challenges.

Instead of listing slightly tweaked ways for you to engage in walking/eating/sitting/breathing meditation, let's take a look at how you can apply on-the-go methods to gain greater clarity about your life and your place in the world.

#1 See Your Alone Moments

First of all, we need to **develop the ability to recognize brief moments throughout the day when we are alone**. You DO go to the bathroom occasionally, right? You DO take a shower most days. You DO brush your teeth. There really are times throughout the day when even the busiest mother and most frenetic social scenester find themselves alone. You need to learn to see YOURS.

Take note of when you are alone. Do you linger in bed for a few minutes each morning before getting up? Do you putter around alone in the

kitchen while waiting for your tea or coffee or toast? Do you spend time reading before you drift off to sleep?

If you find yourself saying, “I just don’t have any quiet time to myself,” the most important thing you can do is figure out IF that is true, and if so, WHY that is true. Are you filling your time with activities that keep you busy—but not fulfilled? Do you find it difficult to resist “busyness” for its own sake?

How would you **feel** if you were told right now that you have the next hour completely free? Note that I didn’t ask “What would you do?”—this isn’t about getting your list of to-do items completed. The important point here is to become aware of any tendency you may have to resist spending quiet time alone without actually accomplishing anything visible.

This is **the most important step in developing your intrapersonal intelligence**, so don’t even CONSIDER moving on to any other activity in this area until you have really looked at how you are spending your time and how you might increase the number of quiet moments you give yourself each day.

#2 See Your Quiet Moments

Once you are able to see the moments you have all to yourself, start looking for the moments when you may be surrounded by others but still have the ability to be introspective. These are times when you might be in a crowd, but nobody is talking to you, nothing is being asked of you, and there is little choice but to be fairly still and quiet.

Do you spend time in a car, bus, train or plane as a passenger? Do you walk to work or school by yourself? Do you eat your lunch silently at your desk or in a lunchroom? Do you wash the dishes alone? Do you fold laundry? Do you mow the lawn or sweep the porch?

You might have others in your vicinity, but if you are not actively involved in conversation with them, then you can count these moments as opportunities for intrapersonal mindfulness. Start seeing them, and note how long they last.

There’s a good chance that you already have a lot of time during which you engage in worrying, fretting, repeating a particular story to yourself, or planning your day down to the last detail.

There is time here for you.

There are moments you can use more mindfully to check in with yourself, observe your thoughts, and gain greater understanding about what is going through your head.

#3 Watch Your Thought Parade

You can watch your thoughts at any time. You don't have to be sitting in lotus position. You don't have to be in a silent room.

In fact, the more flexible you are about popping into mindfulness mode, the more likely you are to see opportunities throughout the day that are perfect moments for developing greater self-awareness.

As long as you're not actively solving a problem, learning new information or carrying on a conversation, it's likely that you have time to play the thought parade game.

It's as though you are a spectator at a parade. Look to your right—here comes a float now! Watch this thought without getting caught up in it. You're not climbing aboard and throwing beads. You're not up there, waving at the crowd. You're not dancing on it.

You are a spectator watching this thought as it passes slowly before you. Simply note it, name it in the most clear, one-word way—"mother" or "lunch" or "husband" or "work"—and let it go. Direct your attention to the next thought—it's certainly headed your way!

It is very simple to play the thought parade game—even young children can do this very easily. There's no need to spend a long time. Even a single minute is just fine.

The only goal is to watch. No judging of the contents. No thumbs up or thumbs down. It's as though you have a clipboard, and when that float/thought appears, you simply note it and move on to the next.

There are probably a dozen moments throughout your day when you could secretly engage in the thought parade game without shifting your schedule in the slightest.

Find those dozen moments and start watching!

#4 Do The Squat

For many clients who tell me they find it difficult to meditate, I recommend what I refer to as "the squat"—though other positions work just as well.

You want to find a way to connect contemplation with a body position so that you have a muscle reminder as well as a mental reminder to look inside yourself.

Watch your thought parade while you squat, and connect that hamstring stretch with a visual of yourself sitting on a curb to watch a parade.

The point is to pick a position that you secretly designate as a trigger for thought-watching, but that you can easily do anywhere and under most circumstances. It doesn't have to be squatting—it could be whenever you get down on your knees or sit flat on the floor or sit with one ankle resting on your knee.

I like the squat because it's a helpful stretch to maintain flexibility as we get older and it is utilitarian—we can still look busy while we're doing it!

You can do it in your office right next to your desk. You can do it in the grocery store—it looks surprisingly similar to searching for something on a bottom shelf. You can do it at home, next to your car (checking your tires, perhaps?), while playing with your children, or while cleaning or weeding.

Use the secret squat as a reminder to watch your thoughts. You might spend only 30 seconds checking in with yourself, but that's enough time to essentially “hunker down” and take a look at what is going through your mind.

Remember, you want to develop the ability to pop in and out of mindfulness mode, so don't get stuck on the idea that you have to crouch for a long time! This is your moment to ask yourself:

“Can I be here now?”

Use your squat to activate your awareness of the present moment, and watch your mind to see where your thoughts are. Remembering the past? Worrying about the future? Planning? Fretting?

Squat and watch, then stretch and release.

Ahhh....don't you feel more connected to the present?

#5 Know Thyself

One of the ways we can develop greater self-understanding is to take quizzes that illuminate our tendencies to think in certain ways.

You can find a huge variety of such quizzes by visiting Tickle.com. Some are fun, some are a little more serious, but all are valuable in that by simply going through the questions and being thoughtful about your answers, you can become more aware of your own beliefs and habits.

There are questionnaires to help you define your talents, recognize your relationship patterns, or see your hopes and dreams more clearly, so take the time to learn about yourself by getting in the habit of asking questions—and attempting to answer them!

#6 See Your Views

We tend to define ourselves—and others—by political views, but it can be especially illuminating to see our own inconsistencies in the way we view the world.

By visiting PoliticalCompass.org you can take a 15-minute quiz that will help you see what issues are important to you and what particular positions you hold. Warning: you might surprise yourself!

The important thing to keep in mind is that you—and your views—are always changing to some degree. How would you have answered these questions ten years ago? How might you answer them ten years from now?

By seeing your opinions as malleable and your perspective as shifting, you will develop greater mindfulness—and compassion. If you recognize that by paying attention you may become more informed, you are likely to spend more time listening and learning and less time hanging on to your opinions.

Being mindful is all about being flexible, so take note of the positions you tend to hold most steadfastly, and see where you might use your growing awareness as a softening agent.

#7 Know What You're Trying To Hide

Ready to take a good, long look at your implicit associations?

Harvard University's Project Implicit has created a truly eye-opening test that will help you see the prejudices you know you have, plus the ones you think you've buried.

This is one of the most intriguing tests I've ever taken, and I highly recommend it—if you dare. You'll gain greater insight into the conscious-unconscious divergences in your own mind.

Visit Implicit.Harvard.edu/implicit/ and see what you discover about yourself.

#8 Create Affection

I have been especially intrigued by a number of studies that have shown that those who have been asked to find interesting characteristics about a person, place or thing are likely to feel greater affection toward their subject than someone who has NOT been asked to do so.

Isn't that jaw-dropping? I mean, if that's all it takes to create affection, then we need to be constantly asking ourselves—and others—to look for fascinating features about the world around us.

It's a little like your favorite aunt's advice to always find the good things about others, but it's less about positive thinking and more about the way our brains process information.

Try this yourself. Start with something quite innocuous, like tasting a new food for the first time. Don't decide whether you like it after the first bite. Instead, focus on finding three interesting things about it before you even pick up your fork. What does it smell like? What color is it? What does it remind you of?

We tend to jump into the process of making decisions about everything from ideas to people to countries and then focus on backing up that decision using other ideas we've had. This is a natural tendency—we use what we know to judge what we don't know.

But scratch the surface here and give yourself a moment to be completely open-minded before picking a side. You don't need to be black and white about everything—hang out in that grey zone for a while.

By strengthening our ability to become aware of the qualities of other people, places and things, we create greater admiration and affection.

This is a transformative approach to treating yourself and the world with more compassion and kindness.

#9 Face Your Fears

We all have fears. What are yours?

There are many ways to deal with anxiety and phobias, and I'm no expert on that. Here's what I do know: the sooner you figure out what worries you, the sooner you can learn how to deal more skillfully with it. So, the first step is to recognize the triggers that cause you to become anxious.

That's the easy part. You probably have a good idea of the things on your list, and it's likely that you are avoiding those very things as your chosen way of dealing with fear.

Well, avoidance works—to a point. But if you really want to develop your intrapersonal intelligence and create greater mindfulness, working through your fears can be an extremely rewarding and liberating process.

How will you do this? That's up to you, but one book I recommend you read before deciding on your personal approach to overcoming anxiety is ***The Monster in the Cave : How to Face Your Fear and Anxiety and Live Your Life*** by David Mellinger and Steven Jay Lynn.

Many of the tips I've shared in this ebook can be creatively applied to help you deal with your particular trouble spots. Ask yourself how you can use your growing repertoire of mindfulness games to play with your fear.

Did I say PLAY with your fear? Yes, I did. That's because, as in all things, finding humor and feeling compassion can be extraordinarily powerful in learning how to overcome anxiety.

If you've read all the way through this list, you're sure to have a sense of how you might playfully approach your scary stuff while engaging your multiple intelligences and stimulating awareness.

See? You've learned a lot!

Crafting Your Own Combo

There you have it—96 ways to increase awareness and creativity using nothing but your own mind and the world around you.

No special props. No special time. No special place.

So, now you're thinking, "But how am I supposed to get started?"

It's one thing to read a long list of ideas, but it's another thing to actually start playing with mindfulness!

I've got something to inspire you. If you haven't read it yet, I highly recommend that you take an hour or so and read my whimsical little ebook called **PurpleRound M: A Haiku Guide to Real-World Mindfulness™**. You can access it FREE on my website at <http://www.Real-WorldMindfulness.com/free-stuff.htm>

Here are a few more tips from that book, just to get you started:

Purple—choose one purple item in your home. Make sure it's out in the open, not a sweater or pair of socks or a blanket stashed away in a drawer somewhere. It has to be visible. The FIRST TIME each day that you see and notice this purple item, simply say, "I am mindful." That's all. You want to catch yourself paying attention, and reinforce it by making a quick little statement to yourself.

Round—choose one round item that you are sure to touch every day. A steering wheel? A doorknob? Your bathroom sink? Now, the first time each day that you touch this round item, you are going to say, "I am mindful." Not EVERY time you touch it...just the first time that you notice it each day.

M—oh, I am going to make this one easy for you. We're going to use the McDonald's Golden Arches...that big yellow M. The first time each day that you happen to see and notice that big yellow M, say "I am mindful."

Don't think about the fat content, the latest meal deal, this month's nutrition story, or your ideas about multi-national corporations.

Instead, I'm giving you permission to take a break from all of those McDonald's ideas in your head and simply use the Golden Arches as a trigger for mindfulness.

Aren't you lovin' it?

Chocolate—mmmmm. If you're like me, you look for a way to get at least one little bite of chocolate every day. So, you might as well use it as a trigger for mindfulness! When you taste that first bite of chocolate each day, simply say, "Mmmmmm....I am mindful."

So, add it all up and you've spent, what, maybe ten seconds on the Purple Round M Chocolate game every day, right?

Let me ask you this: what ELSE would you be doing with those ten seconds every day?

The point is that you can develop greater mindfulness in very small steps, in very enjoyable ways, and you will be amazed at how easily you can create more awareness by simply PAYING ATTENTION to the things that are already there.

Need one more tip? Here it is:

Read the [Friday Mind Massage ezine every week](#). It's sure to spark that innate mindfulness and give you some silly-but-powerful ways to make your moments count.

Put together your own list of your top five mindfulness tips from this ebook, and start building your own beautiful mindfulness practice based on wonder, fun, and flexibility.

Conclusion

So, there you have it. 101 ways to stimulate that incredible mind of yours.

What are you waiting for? Go out and play!

If you have any questions or suggestions, I'm always happy to hear from you. Please don't hesitate to contact me:

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Thank you so much! I am humbled and honored that you have chosen to make mindfulness a priority in your life.

All the best to you. Let the games begin!

Warmly,

Maya