

An exercise in mindfulness

Choose a daily activity you do without thinking — making a cup of coffee, for example.

Start by making a resolution that you're going to follow through this exercise without interruptions. Do it with careful attention, very slowly, and notice each part of the task as you do it. See how easy it is to speed up again as you forget that you're doing it slowly!

Take the kettle and fill it with water, turning the tap on slowly, turning it off with great caution. Place the kettle back, gently, purposefully, wait for it to boil. Don't go off and do ten jobs while it comes to the boil. Take out your cup and place the coffee filter into it and very carefully pour the water onto it. Wait for it to drip for the required amount of time, and then put the filter in the rubbish. Walk slowly over to the fridge, open the door carefully, take out the milk and close the door. Walk back to the cup and pour the milk, slowly, return it to the fridge.

Sit down. Wait. Pick up the cup carefully, as though it would break if you touched it forcefully. Bring the cup to your mouth very slowly. Sip the coffee and *really taste* it, feel the *texture* of it, notice the *temperature*.

Place the cup down, wait, pause, pick it up again. Continue until you've finished. Notice how often during this simple routine your mind wanders on to something else.

Be aware of:

- ☸ your impatience or patience at the slow speed,
- ☸ what it feels like to be attentive to this task,
- ☸ how often your mind wanders off elsewhere.

Do this a number of times and you may recognise that we spend very little time 'in the present'. So much of the day is spent doing things physically, while the mind is somewhere else, leading to confusion, forgetfulness, and a feeling of not being in control.

Other ways of developing mindfulness are to *listen* to ourselves and to ask:

- ॐ what am I doing?
- ॐ why am I doing it?
- ॐ do I listen well to others?

Inwardly reflect more frequently and check in to what is going on inside. Try to make space between tasks you do, consciously completing one before you start the next. Finish the day by recapping what you have done during the day.