

Taking Time Out for a Time In

BY SARAH McLEAN



Stress is a reality that we are slowly learning to deal with. It has been blamed for all kinds of illnesses and disease. But how do you de-stress when you can't go for a hike, meditate, or go to a yoga class because you are at work? Here are some easy-to-do ways to de-stress while you are on the job courtesy of Sarah McLean, director of the Sedona Meditation Training Company.



START YOUR DAY WITH AN INTENTION

When I arrive in my office I set an intention for the day. Sometimes it is to be efficient, sometimes to be kind, and sometimes to be mindful of my thoughts or my body. I've heard that some people post the intention on a post-it note. Setting an intention is like a point of reference for my day. When I think of intention throughout the day, my awareness is anchored again and again.

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY

Once I am settled into my workday, I usually find myself in front of my computer typing away. This is when I often forget about my body. I don't think I am alone in this. I can be sitting in a very strange position for a long time, and unaware of it as I surf the Internet or type an article. I only notice when it begins to hurt. But there is another way: your body is the

doorway to present moment awareness, because it is always in the present moment (unlike the mind which is usually dwelling in the past or the future).

So how can you reconnect with your body? It's easy. First, bring your attention to your feet. Feel your feet on the floor. Then scan up your legs, noticing your weight on your chair, and the position of your arms and hands. Notice your back against the chair. Relax your shoulders. Read just your alignment. Feel which way your head rests on your neck. Feel your face, including your teeth, your eyes, your jaw, and your forehead. Try to do this at least three times a day.

MINDFULNESS REMINDERS

So how are you going to remember to do this body awareness thing? You can set up some *mindfulness triggers*. A mindfulness trigger is something that will remind you to break out of "automatic pilot" so that you can be more aware, spontaneous, calm, and free.

For example, when you hear the phone ring, you can remind yourself to take your awareness to your body, to smile, and to take three deep breaths before reaching for the phone. Or, you can even send loving thoughts to the caller, even if you don't know who will be. It makes every phone call a bit nicer. It could be the time you bring yourself back to your intention for the day. It's YOUR call.

Often people are in the habit of grabbing for the phone as soon as it rings. This can add to stress, since the compulsive nature of the grabbing suggests that the phone is in charge of our lives. It's subtle, we can't control when the phone rings so we're not in charge of our own lives – feeling out of control is inherently stressful. But we can change that pattern. That small gap that we produce after the phone rings and before we pick it up reminds us that we have choices.

I like to set a mindfulness bell on my computer. I downloaded one for free online and it goes off at random intervals. When it does, I stop what I am doing and turn my attention to my breath or my body or my intention. You can set up your own cues.



STOP FOR A MOMENT

Diana Winston, director of 'mindfulness education' at UCLA's Semel Institute teaches a helpful acronym that can remind us to become aware of ourselves.

"S is for *Stop*." Whatever you're doing, take a pause for a moment.

T is "*Take a Breath*." Take a slow, aware breath. This will help calm you down and return to center.

O is for "*Observe*." Notice what's happening in this present moment. What are you feeling? What's happening in your body? Is there anything obvious that you can notice?

And P is for "*Proceed*." Continue with whatever you were doing. This whole practice should take about 15 seconds.

When my mindfulness bell goes off, I look away from my computer screen outside my window. Or, sometimes I close my eyes, just for a moment. Then I take a deep breath, and feel my body and notice the activity of my mind. I reflect on my intention and go back to my work again.

ORDINARY ACTIONS

Mindfulness triggers can also be ordinary actions or objects in your environment. You can learn to associate those actions and objects with being mindful, so that they act as reminders to be aware. You can choose a specific activity that you do during your day and make it a mindful one.

You will eventually become used to it and the exercise. You could choose your drive home, or walking to the restroom, or drinking a glass of water at your desk.

I like to practice with drinking water. It is easy and begins when I pick it up. I notice the way the light reflects on the water and the glass. I notice how the container

feels in my hand as I hold it. I notice the temperature and feel the sensation of the water as I bring the glass to my lips and take a sip and swallow it. It is easy to practice and you will eventually become used to taking the time out. The day can really be filled with enjoyable ordinary actions.

TRANSITIONS

Sometimes moments of transitions are a good trigger to integrate mindfulness. For example, no matter what kind of job you do, you will likely have to walk to get there and go home. When you walk down the hall at the end of your work day to head home, rather than using this time as an opportunity to worry about all the things you didn't get done or need to do the next day, you can use the walk to practice mindfulness.

You can bring your attention to your feet and legs and to the act of walking. Feel each stride. And if you're walking outside, feel your feet, and also take in the sights and sounds and colors and activity. It is a great opportunity to transition from work life to home life too.

Over time these practices will help you to feel calmer, and happier. They will also help you to stay in the present moment; and not get lost worrying about the past or the future. This moment now is the only one you can be sure of.



Learn more about becoming less stressed and more calm on the job or at home at the Sedona Meditation Training Website at: www.SedonaMeditation.com. You'll find a schedule of meditation classes, retreats, and workshops, and other information on how to stay in the moment and reduce stress. Sarah McLean director of Sedona Meditation Training can be reached at: 928.204.0067

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Augustus) in Western Australia, which is more than 2.5 times the size of Uluru, stands 858 metres above the ground and covers an area of 48 square kilometers. In various tourist guidebooks it is said that 2/3 of Ayers Rock is beneath the surrounding land but this is not the case according to the science of geology, which explains that Uluru is only the exposed tip of a much greater mass of rock extending far below the surrounding plain as an integral part of the earth's crust. Separated from one another by approximately 50 kilometers, Uluru and Kata Tjuta are situated along a straight line passing onto another holy peak known as Mount Conner.

Geologists disagree about the origins of Uluru and Kata Tjuta. The most widely held theory is that both rocks are the remnants of a vast sedimentary bed laid down some 600 million years ago. Over eons of time the bed was raised and folded by movements of the earth's crust, formed into a mountain range, and then slowly eroded leaving the towering rocks behind. The sandstone rock of Uluru is actually gray but is covered with a distinctive red iron oxide coating, while the thirty-six domes of Kata Tjuta are a harder type of granite composed of quartz and feldspar. The origins of the cave-like depressions on both outcroppings, especially those of Uluru, are the subject of debate among geologists but the most commonly held view is that the rock surfaces had been partly eroded and enlarged to form the depressions.

The beginning of Aboriginal settlement in the Uluru region has not been determined, but archaeological findings to the east and west indicate a date more than 10,000 years ago, though some scholars estimate that human settlement in the region may actually date to 22,000 years ago. According to Aboriginal myths, Uluru and Kata Tjuta provide physical evidence of feats performed during the Dreamtime creation period. The aboriginal tribe of Anangu are the direct descendants of these beings and are responsible for the protection and

appropriate management of these ancestral lands. The knowledge necessary to fulfill these responsibilities has been passed down from generation to generation. To the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Anangu tribes Uluru represents the living core of their belief. No other place in Australia is so rich in mythology, song-lines and stories, or so associated with events from the Alcheringa or Dreaming. In the language of the local Aborigines, 'Uluru' is simply a local family name that is applied to both the rock and the waterhole on top of the rock. The thirty-six rounded rocks of Kata Tjuta (meaning 'Many Headed Mountain'), are located in the same National Park as Uluru and the tallest rock, Mt. Olga at 546 meters is about 200 meters higher than Uluru. Kata Tjuta is much less visited by tourists than Uluru and therefore has a more peaceful feeling.

By Aboriginal tradition only certain elderly males may climb the rock but despite this tradition the Australian government allows tourists to make the climb using a metal chain installed in 1964. Over the years there have been at least forty deaths, mainly due to heart failure while climbing Uluru, and several people have plummeted to their death while climbing. Also the Anangu tribe requests that visitors do not photograph certain sections of Uluru, mostly gender-related sacred places, for reasons related to traditional beliefs. This photographic ban is intended to prevent Anangu Aborigines from inadvertently violating this taboo by encountering photographs of the forbidden sites.

The first sighting of Kata Tjuta by a European was in July of 1872, when Ernest Giles was exploring the country some 100 kilometers to the northeast. A large lake barred Giles progress towards Kata Tjuta. He later named the lake and the Kata Tjuta rocks after the then King and Queen of Spain: Amadeus and Olga. Giles returned to explore the area again in 1873 but was beaten to Uluru by William Gosse who sighted the monolith on

July 19 and named it after the Chief Secretary of South Australia, Sir Henry Ayers. Giles also was the first European to climb the rock, which he did, accompanied by an Afghan camel driver.

... The area was declared an Aboriginal Reserve in 1920 and this existed until the 1940s when road access, the possibility of gold in the area, and the tourist potential of Uluru, showed how fragile the original reserve had been. Ayers Rock was created a national park in 1950 and in 1958 was combined with the Olgas to form the Ayers Rock National Park. In 1959 a motel lease was granted near the rock and soon after an airstrip was built. By the 1970s, Ayers Rock and Mount Olga had become the most famous stop on the outback tourist circuit. In 1976 the Commonwealth Government set up the lease at Yulara (a resort complex and service village located 20 km from the base of Uluru) and in 1983 the old tourist facilities near the rock were closed down. In 1985 the title to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was returned to the local Pitjantjatjara Aborigines who, in turn, granted the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service a 99-year lease on the park. Today the Park is jointly managed under direction of a Board of Management that includes a majority of Anangu traditional owners. The Aboriginal community of Mutitjulu is near the western end of Uluru. In 1995, in acknowledgement of Anangu ownership and their relationship with the area, the name of the park was changed from Ayers Rock-Mount Olga to Uluru-Kata Tjuta, its traditional name. Uluru is listed as a World Heritage Area for its natural and man-made attributes.



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