

# Reducing Performance Anxiety Using Mindfulness Techniques



**Dr. Brad Meyer**  
**Stephen F. Austin State University**  
**Associate Professor of Percussion**

# Doctor of Music, Not a Counselor/Therapist

- All the following advice is given to help percussionists/musicians; however, I am not a trained counselor/therapist. People dealing with any mental health issues should immediately seek professional help from a trained counselor/therapist.
  - University Mental Health Services
  - Local Therapists/Counselors
  - Online Therapy/Counseling
- Several mindfulness techniques will be discussed. Try adding just one into you or your student's life. You can always add more later, but the biggest help is to not overwhelm you or your student by trying to do too much when first starting to use any mindfulness techniques.

# What is Mindfulness?

## Mindful.org

- Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us.
- While mindfulness is something we all naturally possess, it's more readily available to us when we practice on a daily basis.
- Whenever you bring awareness to what you're directly experiencing via your senses, or to your state of mind via your thoughts and emotions, you're being mindful. And there's growing research showing that when you train your brain to be mindful, you're actually remodeling the physical structure of your brain.
- ***The goal of mindfulness is to wake up to the inner workings of our mental, emotional, and physical processes.***

# What is Mindfulness Meditation?

## Mindful.org

- Mindfulness meditation asks us to suspend judgment and unleash our natural curiosity about the workings of the mind, approaching our experience with warmth and kindness, to ourselves and others.

# What is Rumination?

**VeryWellMind.com**

- Rumination is the habit of obsessing over negative events that happened in the past —is associated with many negative effects, both on the mind and the body.
- As a general rule, the following can be indicators that you may have fallen into the trap of rumination:
  - ➡ Focusing on a problem for more than a few idle minutes
  - ➡ Feeling worse than you started out feeling
  - ➡ No movement toward accepting and moving on
  - ➡ No closer to a viable solution

# How Do I Practice Mindfulness and Meditation?

## Mindful.org

- Mindfulness is available to us in every moment, whether through meditations and body scans, or mindful moment practices.

# The Basics of Mindfulness Practice

## Mindful.org

- **Set aside some time.** You don't need a meditation cushion or bench, or any sort of special equipment to access your mindfulness skills—but you do need to set aside some time and space.
- **Observe the present moment as it is.** The aim of mindfulness is not quieting the mind, or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: we're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. Easier said than done, but definitely achievable.
- **Let your judgments roll by.** When we notice judgments arise during our practice, we can make a mental note of them, and let them pass.
- **Return to observing the present moment as it is.** Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment.
- **Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back.

# How to Apply Mindfulness Meditation to Music Performance?

## Pre-Performance Body Scan

- The body scan is one of the most effective ways to begin a mindfulness meditation practice. The purpose is to tune in to your body, to reconnect to your physical self, and notice any sensations you're feeling without judgement. While many people find the body scan relaxing, relaxation is not the primary goal. The goal is to train the mind to be more open and aware of sensory experiences—and ultimately, more accepting. With time and practice, the body scan will build your ability to focus and be fully present in your life.



# 5-Minute Body Scan Mindfulness Meditation

**EmbraceChange.nyc**

# What are Grounding Exercises/Techniques

LivingWell.org.au

- Grounding exercises are things you can do to bring yourself into contact with the present moment – the here and now. They can be quick strategies (like taking three deep “belly breaths”) or longer, more formal exercises (like meditation). Different strategies work for different people, and there is no “wrong” way to ground yourself. The main aim is to keep your mind and body connected and working together.

## The Punisher, season 2



*Jigsaw's therapist: Krista Dumont*

# Grounding Techniques/Exercises

## LivingWell.org.au

- Remind yourself of who you are now. Say your name. Say your age now. Say where you are now. Say what you have done today. Say what you will do next.
  - *“My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am 54 years old. I am in my living room, in my home, in Woolloongabba, in Brisbane, in Queensland. I woke up early today. I had a shower and fed my dog. I just finished my coffee and toast. Soon I am going to walk to the train station and go in to work. I am going to walk down \_\_\_\_\_ street and then turn left at the bike shop. Then I am going to....”*
- Take ten slow breaths. Focus your attention fully on each breath, on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash some water on your face. Notice how it feels. Notice how the towel feels as you dry. Use words in your mind to describe the sensations.
- Sip a cool drink of water.
- Hold a cold can or bottle of soft drink in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and taste as you drink.
- If you wake during the night, remind yourself who you are, and where you are. Tell yourself who you are and where you are. What year is it, what age are you now? Look around the room and notice familiar objects and name them. Feel the bed you are lying on, the warmth or coolness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear.
- Turn your attention to the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them. Notice how your feet feel to be encased in shoes or socks, or resting on the floor.
- If you are with other people, and you feel comfortable with them, concentrate closely on what they are saying and doing, and remind yourself why you are with them.
- If you are sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it. Notice the pressure of the chair, or floor, or table against your body and limbs.
- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part of your body feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.

# Grounding Techniques/Exercises, Con't

## LivingWell.org.au

- Stop and listen. Notice and name what sounds you can hear nearby. Start with the closest or loudest sounds. Gradually move your awareness of sounds outward, so you are focusing on what you can hear in the distance.
- Hold a mug of tea in both hands and feel its warmth. Inhale its scent. Don't rush drinking it; take small sips, and take your time tasting each mouthful.
- Look around you, notice what is front of you and to each side. Name and notice the qualities of large objects and then smaller ones.
- Pick one interesting object in your field of vision. Trace its outline with your eyes, as if you were drawing its lines.
- Get up and walk around. Take your time to notice each step as you take one, then another.
- Stamp your feet, and notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.
- Clap and rub your hands together. Hear the noise and feel the sensation in your hands and arms.
- Wear an elastic band on your wrist (not tight) and flick it gently, so that you feel it spring back on your wrist.
- If you can, step outside, notice the temperature of the air and how it is different or similar to where you have just come from.
- Stretch.
- Notice five things you can see, five things you can hear, and five things you can feel, taste, or smell.
- If you have a pet, spend some time with them. Notice what is special and different about them.
- Run your hands over something with an interesting texture. Describe it in your mind, as if you have never felt anything like it before.
- Get a sultana, a nut, or some seeds. Focus on how it looks, feels and smells. Put it in your mouth and roll it around, noticing how it feels. Chew it slowly and mindfully, before noticing how it feels to swallow.
- Put on a piece of instrumental music. Give it all of your attention.
- Another option with music is to sit with a piece of paper and a pen. Start drawing a line as the music plays, representing it in the abstract on the page. Follow the music with the pen.
- If you have a garden or some plants, tend to them for a bit. Plants, and actual soil, can be an excellent "grounder!"

# Mindful Breathing Exercise

## StopBreatheThink.com

- Whether you are standing or sitting, become aware of your posture, and straighten your spine so that you feel alert and relaxed, but not rigid.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Notice how your body feels.
- Bring your awareness to any part of your body that feels tense, and relax those muscles.
- Now bring your awareness back to your breath.
- Notice where you feel the breath most in your body.
- Settle into a relaxed focus as you follow the sensation of each inhale and exhale.
- When you notice that your mind has wandered (which it will, often!), simply acknowledge the sensations, thoughts, or feelings that arise with open curiosity, and then let them go.
- Continue to gently redirect your attention back to your breath for as long you'd like.

# Daily Mindfulness Practices

**Mindful.org**

**1. Mindful Wakeup**

**2. Mindful Eating**

**3. Mindful Pause**

**4. Mindful Workout**

**5. Mindful Driving**



# Daily Mindfulness Practices - [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org)

## Mindful Wakeup: Start with a Purpose

1. On waking, sit in your bed or a chair in a relaxed posture.
2. Take three long, deep, nourishing breaths
3. Ask yourself: “What is my intention for today?”
  - How might I show up today to have the best impact?
  - What quality of mind do I want to strengthen and develop?
  - What do I need to take better care of myself?
  - During difficult moments, how might I be more compassionate to others and myself?
  - How might I feel more connected and fulfilled?
4. Set your intention for the day.
5. Throughout the day, check in with yourself.

# Daily Mindfulness Practices - [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org)

## Mindful Eating: Enjoy Every Mouthful

- 1. Breathe before eating.**
- 2. Listen to your body.**
- 3. Eat according to your hunger.**
- 4. Practice peaceful eating.**
- 5. If you don't love it, don't eat it.**



- Take your first three bites mindfully, experience the taste, flavors, textures, and how much enjoyment you are receiving from a certain food. Make a mindful choice about what to eat based on what you really enjoy.



# Daily Mindfulness Practices - [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org)

## Mindful Pause: Rewire Your Brain

### 1. Trip over what you want to do.

- If you intend to do some yoga or to meditate, put your yoga mat or your meditation cushion in the middle of your floor so you can't miss it as you walk by.

### 2. Refresh your triggers regularly.

- Use something like sticky notes to help remind yourself of your new intention(s)

### 3. Create new patterns.

- Example: "If phone rings, take a breath before answering."

# Daily Mindfulness Practices - [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org)

## Mindful Workout: Activate Your Mind and Your Muscles

1. Be clear about your aim

2. Warm up

- 5 minutes

3. Settle into a rhythm

- 10 to 15 minutes

4. Challenge yourself

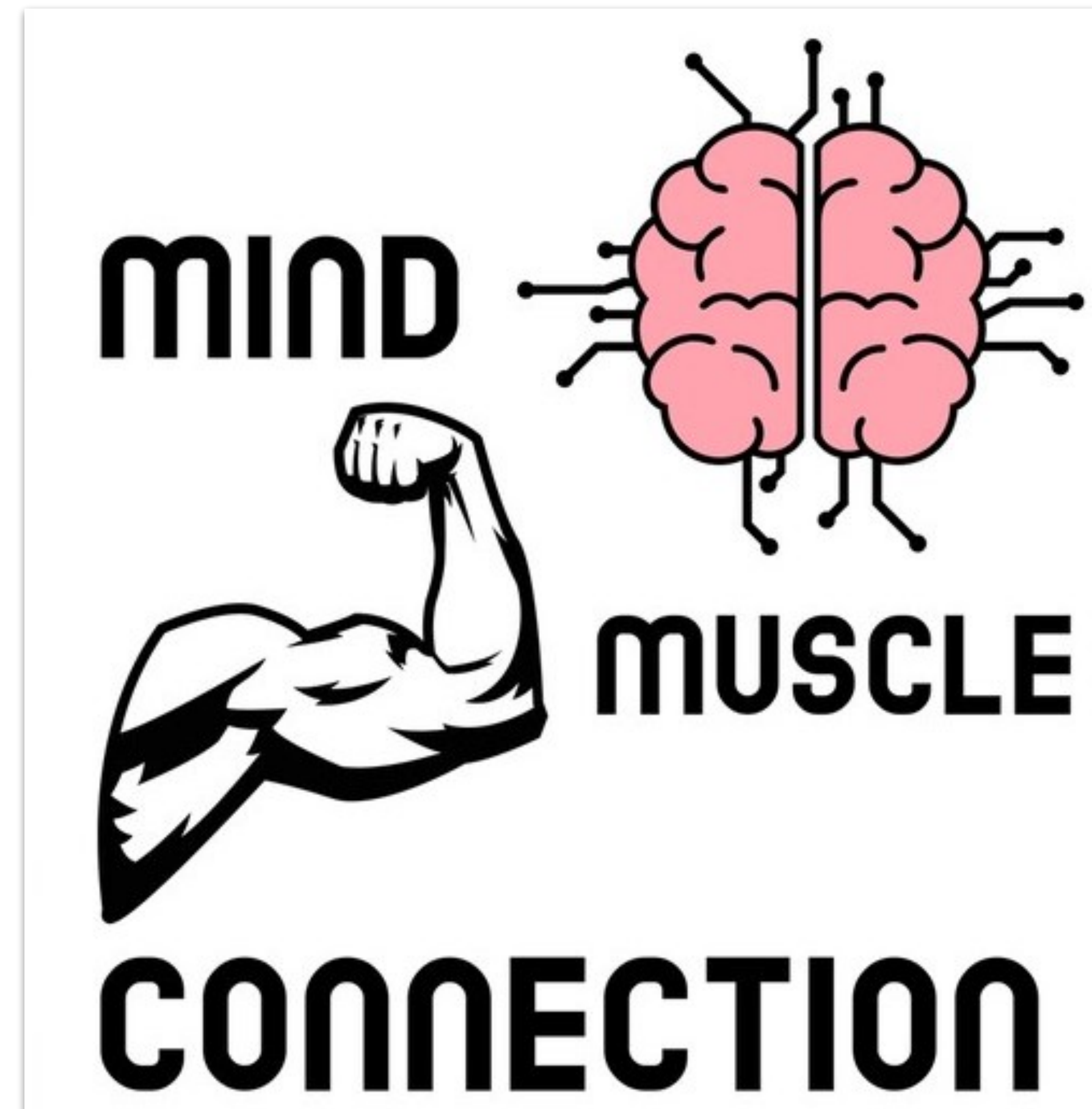
- 10 to 15 minutes

5. Cool down

- 5 minutes

6. Rest

- 5 minutes



# Daily Mindfulness Practices - [mindful.org](http://mindful.org)

**Mindful Driving: Drive Yourself Calm, Not Crazy**



# **Daily Mindfulness Practices - [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org)**

## **Mindful Driving: Drive Yourself Calm, Not Crazy**

- 1. First, take a deep breath.**
- 2. Ask yourself what you need.**
- 3. Give yourself what you need.**
- 4. Look around and recognize that all the other drivers are just like you.**
- 5. Take another deep breath.**

# Resources for Further Study

**InsideHigherEd.com** <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/mindfulness-awareness-stress-reduction>

- [Mindfulness Audio Files and Exercises | Portland Psychotherapy Clinic](#)
- [Guided Meditation and Breathing for Nervous System Balancing](#)
- [Quiet Mind Cafe Guided Meditations for Stress Relief & Better Sleep](#)
- [Toward the First Revolution in the Mind Sciences](#)
- [Mindfulness Stress Reduction And Healing](#)
- [The Guided Meditation Site](#)
- [iAwake: How to Learn to Meditate](#)
- [YouTube - Self-Esteem: A Guided Relaxation Session](#)
- [San Francisco based coaching, hypnosis and bodywork with Scott Mills, Ph.D.](#)
- [YouTube - Confidence Boost Meditation](#)
- [YouTube - Guided Meditation - Blissful Deep Relaxation](#)
- [YouTube - Loving Myself - Guided Meditation - Relaxing soothing Music - Brahma Kumaris](#)
- [Mindfulness Meditation - YouTube](#)
- [Meditation Center](#)
- [Wake up and go in the morning - a 10 minute guided meditation - YouTube](#)