

September: A Time to Slow Down and Reconnect



As we move into September, autumn offers us an opportunity to slow the pace a little after the busyness of summer. It is a time to reconnect with nature and to be in awe of its ever-changing face — the changing colours, shapes and textures of the trees, the cooler air and the wonderful smells that surround us as the natural world gradually retreats towards winter.

Nature reminds us that retreat is not an ending. Beneath the surface, it is regenerating and preparing for spring, when new beginnings emerge once again. In much the same way, mindfulness encourages us to remember that each day offers us the opportunity for a new beginning.

As the seasons change, September can be a lovely time to give ourselves a little space each day to move away from our busy, thinking minds and reconnect with our feeling, sensing selves. Rather than always being caught up in thoughts about what has happened or what needs to happen next, we can pause and simply drink in what is around us.

This might mean taking a mindful walk and noticing the movement of our bodies, feeling our feet connecting with the ground and becoming aware of our breathing. We can awaken our senses to the new season — noticing the changing colours, listening to the sounds around us, feeling the cooler breeze on our skin and taking in the scents of the earth and trees.

Mindfulness and meditation are not only about sitting quietly on our cushions. They can be woven into the ordinary moments of our everyday lives. A walk, a cup of tea, a few conscious breaths, or simply pausing to notice the world around us can all become opportunities to reconnect.

After the heat and intensity of summer, September gently invites us to pause and notice the landscape changing around us, returning to the familiar greenness of the season.

Taking time out for ourselves each day, however it suits us personally, can be like giving ourselves the gift of a mini retreat. These small moments of stillness and connection can help us to build a greater sense of peace within ourselves — and with the world around us.

10 Mindfulness Tasks for September

A little mindfulness each day can help us slow down, notice the present moment and appreciate the everyday things around us. Simply give it a try and see what you notice, you can do as many or a few as you'd like, or substitute your own tasks like gardening, reading painting and so on...

1 — One Minute of Breathing

Find a comfortable position and bring your attention to your breathing. For one minute, simply notice the air moving in and out. You don't need to change your breathing — just observe it.

Notice: What does your breathing feel like?

2 — A Mindful Cup of Tea

Make yourself a cup of tea or coffee and, before taking a sip, pause. Notice its colour, aroma, warmth and the feel of the cup in your hands. Drink it slowly, paying attention to each mouthful.

Notice: How often do you usually drink without really tasting?

3 — Mindful Walking

Take a short walk, indoors or outside. For a few minutes, focus on the physical sensations of walking — your feet touching the ground, your legs moving and the rhythm of your steps.

Notice: What did you see or hear that you might normally overlook?

4 — Five Things

Pause wherever you are and look around. Find **five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can feel, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.**

Notice: How did this change your attention?

5 — Nature in Focus

Spend five minutes looking closely at something in nature — perhaps a tree, flower, leaf, cloud or bird. Resist the temptation to label it immediately. Instead, notice its shapes, textures, colours and movement.

Notice: What details did you discover?

6 — Thoughts Are Just Thoughts

Sit quietly for a few minutes and notice your thoughts. Instead of following them, imagine each thought as a cloud passing across the sky. Let it arrive, and then let it drift away.

Notice: Can you observe a thought without getting caught up in it?

Day 7 — Three Good Things

At the end of the day, pause and think of **three things you appreciated today.** They can be very small — a good conversation, sunshine through the window, a favourite song or a delicious meal.

Notice: How does deliberately looking for the good affect your mood?

Day 8 — A Listening Exercise

Choose somewhere to sit quietly for five minutes. Close your eyes if comfortable and listen. Notice sounds close to you, then sounds further away. Don't try to identify or judge them — simply listen.

Notice: How many different sounds can you hear?

Day 9 — Mindful Hands

Choose an everyday activity involving your hands — washing the dishes, gardening, knitting, making something or even applying hand cream. Slow down and pay attention to the sensations, movements and textures.

Notice: What happens when an ordinary task becomes your focus?

♥ Day 10 — A Moment of Kindness

Today, deliberately offer yourself or someone else a small act of kindness. It might be a smile, a phone call, a compliment, making someone a cup of tea — or simply speaking kindly to yourself.

Then pause for a moment and notice how the experience feels.

Notice: How does kindness affect both the giver and receiver?

🌿 At the end of the 10 days...

Take a few moments to reflect:

Which exercise did you enjoy most?

Which one surprised you?

Is there one you might continue beyond September?

Mindfulness isn't about emptying your mind or doing everything perfectly. **It's simply about paying attention to the present moment with a little more curiosity and kindness.**

Why not invite a friend or fellow u3a member to take the challenge with you?