The following is a list of guidelines that can be helpful in sustaining patterns of daily meditation:

- **Do some practice, no matter how brief, every day.** The “everydayness” of mindfulness practice is hugely important as a way to keep mindfulness fresh, available, and ready for you whenever you need it most (and also when you’re not expecting it).

- **Meditate every day, even if only for 10 seconds.** This is the advice of meditation teacher and author Joseph Goldstein. Those 10 seconds can be enough to shift our sense of presence and even encourage us to sit longer. Renowned meditation master, Thich Nhat Hanh, has his students pause throughout the day and practice “10 breaths” of mindfulness as a way to keep the practice fresh and alive.

- **Do the practice at the same time, in the same place.** As much as possible, build mindfulness into the fabric of your daily routine by keeping it consistent and part of your overall health and hygiene, like brushing your teeth or taking a shower.

- **When you first wake up in the morning, BREATHE.** Before you get out of bed, take a relaxed posture lying down and bring your attention to your breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.

- **Throughout the day, notice your posture.** When you remember, pay attention to how your body feels and the changes happening physically over the course of a day. Be aware of how your body and mind feels when you move from lying down to standing, to sitting, to walking, to various other activities. Notice the transitions and how you settle into your body from one posture to the next.

- **Use “bells of mindfulness.”** Periodically as you go about your day, whenever you hear a phone ring, a bird sing, a train pass, a car horn, people laughing, the wind blowing – treating any sound as if it were a gentle bell ringing – take a few moments to really listen with your whole body and be present and awake.

- **Mindful eating and drinking.** Take a minute and breathe whenever you are about to eat or drink something. Look at your food or drink and bring awareness to the color, shape, texture, smell, and taste of the object you are contacting. Take a moment to notice the process of various elements coming together for your food or drink to be here – fire, earth, water, wind, space as well as human and animal. Bring an intention of consciousness, awareness, and care to your meal.

- **Bring awareness to listening and talking.** Engage in a practice of actively listening and mindfully talking. Can you listen without rushing to agree or disagree, like or dislike what you hear? Can you listen without planning what you will say next? Can you allow pauses or breaks in the conversation even if there is a felt sense of discomfort or awkwardness? Can you say what you need to say simply and concisely? Can you give voice to your experience or your perspective even if it feels scary or vulnerable? Can you notice how your mind and body feel as you engage in conversation with someone?

- **Develop a practice of waiting.** Whenever you have to wait in line or are put on hold while on the phone, try to use this time to simply notice your body and your breathing. See if you can simply stay in the moment without trying to cover it up with distractions or busyness. Notice simple things around you taking place in the moment. Feel how your body feels whenever you get impatient or irritable. Notice your thoughts when you feel frustrated in the moment and continue to bring awareness to the breath.

- **Notice your body at various points of the day.** Be aware of how you are holding your body and what you can perceive through the senses – sight, sound, smell, taste, touch. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs. Notice any points of tightness, tension, or holding in the body. See if you can breathe into them and on the outbreath, see if you can release and let go of excess tension. If possible, do some light stretching or yoga poses, not as a way to fix the discomfort or tension, but as a way to meet the experiences with open awareness and a relaxed mind.

- **Be mindful in your routine.** Brushing your teeth, washing your face, brushing your hair, doing the laundry or dishes, putting on your shoes, typing on your computer, riding public transportation, walking between places – simply bring gentle awareness and careful attention to each activity.

- **View practice like caring for a plant.** It is healthier to give a little water each day than giving it a bucketful once a month. Nurturing your practice with consistent care, attention, and patience will allow it to develop solid roots and to grow into its natural potential.

- **View practice as self-nourishment.** Rather than seeing our meditation as a project or as another task on our to-do list, remember that your practice is a way for you to make time and space for yourself to *simply be*. The practice may not always feel nourishing – again, it is creating a place where you can be with whatever is going on for you, letting go of any ideas of how life should be or how you need to be different somehow.
o **Explore ways to inspire and re-inspire your practice.** Give yourself various ways to engage the practice, through books, audio talks, videos and documentaries, group sittings, and various reminders. Some practitioners use helpful quotes or “slogans” visible at home or at the office as gentle alerts to steer our attention back to mindful awareness of the present experience.

o **Explore practicing with others.** Practicing regularly with other people is one of the most powerful ways to keep practice vital and alive. It is also beneficial to have others to share experiences with from time to time. Even if it is only one person, sharing practice by meditating together, talking about challenges, and discussing insights is hugely supportive.

o **You can always begin again.** The essence of mindfulness practice is a “fresh start” – letting go of the past and starting again in each new moment, just like coming back to the breath when the mind has wandered away. If you find that you have not practiced in a while, rather than getting caught in remorse, regret, or self-criticism, simply begin again, right then and there.

o **When you lie down to sleep, BREATHE.** Before you fall asleep, take a few moments to take a comfortable lying position and bring your attention to simply breathing. Observe five mindful breaths.

> “The mystery of life is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be experienced.”
> (Aart Van Der Leeuw)

**A Gentle Reminder of Mindfulness - The Three-Minute Breathing Space Revisited**

Finally, we return to a simple reminder to adopt a posture of wakefulness, vision, compassion, and kindness as you step into the next moments of your life, as you step into your life in general. At any moment, it is never too late to begin again, to be open, and to move forward. Freedom is never very far away:

- Very consciously, adopt an upright and dignified posture.
- Gently recognize and acknowledge your current experience of thoughts, emotions, and physical feelings.
- Gather your attention and rest it on the movements of the breath.
- Expand your awareness to the body as a whole, then to all experiences arising in the present moment.
- Choose your next step into mindful action:
  1. Move forward with the situation you’re in with a fresh mind.
  2. Bring open, friendly curiosity to parts of the body where there is intensity arising.
  3. Consciously face any negative thinking patterns as mental events, letting them come and pass.
  4. Take care of yourself with activities of enjoyment, growth, or mindful awareness.

**The Summer Day**

*By Mary Oliver*

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
Who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down –
Who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don’t know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?