



FLORIDA BAR NEWS

SEARCHING FOR MINDFULNESS

By Scott Rogers ▶ Special to the News ▶ Columns

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If asked for the most direct route to practice mindfulness — the simplest instruction, the most bang for the buck — a pretty good answer would be “pay attention to the breath.”

Most every guided mindfulness practice offers pointers and reminders for doing just this. For example, the common instruction “and should you notice your mind wandering . . .” is not necessary but serves as a helpful reminder to . . . *return attention to the breath*. With practice, attention steadies a little longer on the breath and such reminders become intuitive, self-guided. The breath is merely but one expression of something arising in the present moment. It can be replaced with anything — other sensations in the body, the person talking to you, a feeling, the book you are reading.

The challenge for many is that sitting relatively still and paying attention to the breath can be “boring” and we get restless, fidgety, and seek out greater stimulation. Of course, that’s the whole point. If we sat down and could remain calmly seated with a steady attention there would little utility in doing so to train attention. It can be helpful to reflect on Pascal’s reminder that, and I’m paraphrasing: “all of our problems are caused by *our inability* to sit quietly by ourselves” or [on research](#) finding that participants would rather administer a mild shock to themselves than patiently await the experimenter’s return.

Below is an instructive mindfulness practice — yes, mindfulness practice! Set your timer for six minutes and find some of the words at the bottom of the word search. More to follow on the other side of your six-minute practice.

Mindfulness Word Search

O R I N N O I S S A P M O C R
A T T E N T I O N W I S D O M
T Y W O Q Z Y M Z W E Q V K M
W M S S E N L U F D N I M Z O
V T R E L A X A T I O N W G A
B B C P C C U P N W G Y E L F
B A L A N C E T S U R T C T G
O B W B E G R A T I T U D E E
V V N O I T A R T N E C N O C
X S U H F Q R S U C O F G D F
Z I Z Y T I N E R E S W S K F
T I C O M X S S E N E R A W A
N W H B X P I H S R E D A E L
H J Y T I M I N A U Q E C Z O
C P Q N U Q U Z Y R E T S Y M

relaxation	gratitude	mindfulness	leadership
serenity	trust	concentration	calm
attention	wisdom	compassion	equanimity
awareness	focus	balance	?????

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What were those six minutes like for you? Many people would prefer to spend six minutes (or longer, to be sure) doing a word search than sitting and sensing the breath flowing through the body. Why? Reflect on your experience. You probably found the passage of time to go quickly, without feeling restless or bored. You felt like you were getting somewhere — accomplishing something — and, were this your job, you'd be able to bill .1 hour for your efforts. Of course, if you turned it into a contest, you might have felt a little anxious were you running close on time. The instruction was merely to find some of the words, not to complete the search. If you found yourself in a race against the clock, who were you competing with? It's good to conserve your energy until you really need it.

When asked why they practice mindfulness, many people would circle some of the words in the word search. After all, these are many of the qualities we seek to bring more fully into our life. And, just as the words are there in front of you, these qualities are closer than you think. So, the next time you decide to

practice mindfulness and allocate a few minutes to paying attention to the breath (the most portable, easy to remember, and bottom-line practice), breathe easy as there is no rush, no finish line.

The two practices — word search and breath awareness — are perhaps most notably different in that the word search more fully captures your attention. In contrast, when paying attention to the breath, it is up to *you* to deploy and sustain your attention. Through practice we become less dependent on the object needing to satisfy us, and better able to concentrate and focus attention wherever we choose. Even more, we find satisfaction in being present for our experience, as it is, open to the mystery of the next moment.

By the way, if you are wondering about the mystery word (?????), if you think you found it and want to double check, please write and let me know.

If you have a question about mindfulness and integrating it into the practice of law that you would like answered in this column, send it to srogers@law.miami.edu.



*Scott Rogers, M.S., J.D., is a nationally recognized leader in the area of mindfulness in law and founded and directs the University of Miami School of Law's Mindfulness in Law Program where he teaches mindful ethics, mindful leadership, mindfulness and negotiation, and mindfulness in law. He is the creator of Jurisight, one of the first CLE programs in the country to integrate mindfulness and neuroscience and conducts workshops and presentations on the role of mindfulness in legal education and across the legal profession. He is author of the recently released, "**The Mindful Law Student: A Mindfulness in Law Practice Guide**," written for all audiences.*