

Performing Tasks with Intention

Objective

To engage in your daily tasks with intention, while observing your thoughts and feelings.

You Should Know

When you experience overwhelming thoughts and feelings, you might become distracted from focusing on the task you are performing at that moment. Have you ever driven somewhere on “automatic pilot” – getting to your destination without noticing the ride itself? Or, have you watched television without noticing what you are seeing and hearing? These are just some of the ways that people act without intention or awareness.

Describe a time when you performed an important task while distracted by your thoughts or emotions. What was the task? What were you thinking and feeling? How successful were you in completing your task?

When you perform tasks with intention, you are aware of what you are experiencing in that moment. By observing and releasing overwhelming emotions and returning focus to your task, your mind can get quiet. You can then solve problems, make healthier decisions, and accomplish your goals.

What You Should Do

Name: _____ Date: _____

Perform an everyday task (such as eating, showering, walking, or brushing your teeth) with intention and awareness. As you follow the steps below, answer the corresponding questions.

Choose a task: _____

Notice distressing or distracting thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations you experience as you prepare for the task. Write them down.

Next, focus your attention on performing the task and describe what you experience (for example, if your task is brushing your teeth, describe the sensations of the toothbrush in your mouth, the taste of the toothpaste, and the way your back bends as you rinse out your mouth in the sink).

As distracting thoughts, emotions, and judgments arise, observe them and allow them to pass. Describe.

Refocus your attention and awareness on your task and the present moment. Did you observe any change in the intensity of your thoughts, emotions, or judgments when you refocused on the task? Explain.

Complete your task. When you performed your task with intention and awareness, how was it different from previous times you completed that task? How was it the same? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

What important tasks and actions – at home, work, in your relationships, etc. – could you perform with intention and awareness using the steps above?

What do you think would improve if you were more intentional while doing those tasks or actions?

How can being more intentional help you manage overwhelming or upsetting thoughts and emotions by simply observing them?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?
