

Minding the MOMENT

A simple way to move
your focus off your pain.

CAN WASHING YOUR HANDS RELIEVE ARTHRITIS PAIN AND INCREASE YOUR ENERGY? Yes – if you take a mindful approach to the mundane task. Mindfulness is about bringing the body into harmony with action and the environment through awareness, says Donald Altman, an Oregon psychotherapist, Portland State University professor and former Buddhist monk.

“With mindfulness we are not thinking ahead – we are focused on what is happening now,” Altman says. And mindful attention can prevent mistakes, fight fatigue and ease the stress that exacerbates pain by helping us identify and release limiting beliefs and judgments.

To become more mindful, Altman recommends taking simple approaches to everyday tasks:

Go for a drive. Before you leave, sit quietly for 10 seconds. Feel the metal of the key. Listen to the engine. What do you see? Be aware of the vibration between you, the car and the road as you travel.

Wash your hands. First declare your intention: “I’m going to wash my hands.” Then get quiet. Notice your posture. Turn on the faucet and listen. Feel the water and the friction of your hands. Watch the water drain.

Savor a Hershey’s Kiss. Listen to the wrapper tearing open. Smell the cocoa. Feel your muscles constrict when you put the candy in your mouth. Identify where in your mouth the flavor is most intense.

Observe your environment. Describe each object in detail, without judgment or expectation. If you are judgmental, become aware of that, too. Describe crumbs on the counter, but don’t label them as dirty. Just see what is there.