

CHAPLAIN'S TEA CART NOTES

This guide is by Ed Halliwell; adapted by Chaplain Donnel.

How to Be Mindful With a Cup of Tea

Build moments of mindfulness into the day by enjoying a cup of Tea



Bringing mindfulness to simple activities like drinking tea trains us to direct attention consciously towards awareness and grace. We might think we choose what we're paying attention to in life, but in reality most of us are driven by habit and impulse. By deliberately choosing to attend to an activity, we slow things down and let ourselves become aware of the process of attending and perhaps how little control we usually have over it. We might notice the repeated wandering of the mind as we attempt to stay with what's happening in *the present moment*.

We are learning to see what's often obscured by distraction. By coming back repeatedly to the various aspects of tea-drinking, we are cultivating the capacity to focus. And because we're practicing this with gentleness, without judging ourselves or striving to reach some goal (even the goal of becoming better at paying attention), we are simultaneously training in acceptance and compassion. We are learning to see what's often obscured by distraction.

Suggestions for mindful tea-drinking practice

1. **OPEN YOUR SENSES: Color, Taste, Smell, Temperature, Sound**
2. **TASTE THE TEA**
3. **SWALLOW THE TEA**
4. **NOTICE THOUGHTS THAT DISTRACT:** Pause and notice any feelings of irritation, or thoughts such as: Hurry up, I've got better things to do. Or perhaps a sense of peace or stillness enters you. If so, where do you feel it? Is it changing from moment to moment, or staying the same? Maybe there's something else going on in your mind and body, perhaps unrelated to the tea-drinking, pulling you into thoughts of the past or the future. If so, just notice it. Bring gentle awareness to whatever emerges. Becoming conscious of how much the mind wanders is a sign of growing awareness.
5. **RETURN YOUR AWARENESS TO THE CUP OF TEA:** Now, return your attention to the cup of tea in your hand. (Has the temperature dropped?) Watch as you decide when to begin the process of taking another sip. Continue drinking the tea until the cup is empty, or you decide to stop drinking. If the latter, be curious about what is prompting that decision. Has the tea gone cold, has the taste changed, is there an impulse to get on with your next activity? (If the latter, what does that feel like? Is there a place in your body where you feel it most strongly?) Whatever you choose to do in each moment, try to watch the experience from an engaged observer's perspective.



REMEMBER: You don't have to follow these steps like a strict to-do list. The key is to open yourself to the spirit of the practice, sensing with gentle precision what's happening, moment by moment, and coming back to sensing whenever you notice you've drifted into thought.