

Moving Meditation

5 Ways to Increase Mindfulness As You Run

By Julie Phillips-Turner, RYT, AYS



For all of the runners out there who are also devoted yogis, there's no doubt that you either do a bit of asana before or after a run—and probably both. However, have you ever thought about doing yoga while you run? Or running as a form of yoga? Have you ever thought of running as a moving meditation?

Some of us run alone, some in groups and others in races. We all have our preferences. But whether we're in a marathon or running down a path by ourselves, it is something that we essentially do alone. Running requires us to rely on ourselves—our strength, balance, and endurance.

It also requires our complete attention, just like meditation.

Running is a lot like yoga.

Like yoga, running is a great way to study the self. Yoga is a form of practicing our mind and body connection—just like running, we rely on listening to the body to keep us moving towards our next goal—and when we don't, we end up getting hurt.

When we do listen to the body, breath, and what surrounds us, our mind becomes clearer, and so does our practice and focus. Outside of endurance, how much attention do you give to the way you breathe? Or where you place your feet each time they hit the ground?

Here are a few ways to enhance your mindfulness during your next run by turning your run into a moving meditation:

1. Notice your breath.

This one thing we always do in yoga class becomes essential for runners as well.

As the breath becomes more forceful when we tire, the system becomes more fatigued. Try monitoring the breath using an even breath count—whether it's in 2, out 2—try to challenge yourself to keep it consistent—just as if you're doing a vinyasa, or a moving meditation.

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2. Notice your alignment.

Are you leaning forward? Hunching your shoulders? Are your knees stable? See what happens when you consciously open your chest with shoulders back and your spine straight—does your breath feel any different?

3. Look at the space around you.

Just noticing what is in front of you or around you can help determine your path. Check for obstacles: tree roots, pot holes, and other bumps in the road. Also, try noticing new things on an old path—what has changed? What haven't you noticed before?

4. Take a different path.

Seek out new life and new civilizations and boldly go where you haven't gone before.

If your path gets predictable, it's time to change. If you've always stopped at the pink mailbox, try a new goal. If you've always run through the same trail in the woods, try somewhere with more sun. If you've always run on flat land, try an area with some hills.

5. Compete against yourself instead of other people.

This applies if you run with others or not. If you typically run 3 miles, go for 5; if it's 6, go for 10, and so on. Notice what might be holding you back.

Connecting with the witness of “who” is running allows us to be in the moment. Resist the urge to create a grocery list, or play out the day's drama, can help you to focus more on your awareness. Using the principles of yoga to increase performance and endurance can help you develop the witness in each moment.

Know what's around you, and within you, and that you're capable of expanding your practice on the running path, just as you are on your mat.

