

WAIT: A Mindfulness Practice for Waiting in Line

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Last week, I spent an hour during my lunchtime at the DMV.

Which means I spent a lot of time **waiting**.

And I spent a lot of time **observing other people waiting**.

We're not very good at waiting, are we?

Research shows we spend over 5 HOURS A MONTH waiting in lines. That's almost **three full days** a year!

Waiting in line provides a perfect opportunity for us to practice **mindfulness**. Instead of reaching for our phones to distract us and remove us from the present moment, we can **WAIT**. Instead of getting wrapped up in the story in our heads about how miserably slow this line is (and how ALL the other ones are moving faster), we can simply **WAIT**.

Ultimately, when we spend our time wishing everything would just go faster.... *we're not fully present*. Mindfulness teaches us that **no moment is an "on the way" moment**. The next time you find yourself frustrated while waiting, try this practice to bring yourself into **the only present moment you have!**

How to Practice WAITing

Any time you have to stop and
WAIT during the day is an
opportunity to practice mindfulness.



WATCH

What's actually happening?



ACCEPT

Allow what is here to be here.
Like a cloud, it will pass.



INVESTIGATE

What story are you making
up? Is it as bad as you think?



TEND

Practice compassion -- for
yourself and others.

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WATCH

Take a moment to be present and observe **what is happening right now**. What do you see, smell, and hear? What is *actually* happening in the present moment? Imagine you are simply a **camera**, taking in everything in your field of awareness, without judgment or commentary.

ACCEPT

Allow that **what is here is here...** because it's here! You can't change the length of the line. You can't change the fact that it's a new employee being trained in and the line's going to move a little bit

slower.

Simply allow what is. Jon Kabat-Zinn says “everything is part of the curriculum.” What can you learn from this moment? Perhaps you can practice gratitude for the ease with which you can acquire the things you need, with only the slight inconvenience of a wait. Perhaps you can use this moment to simply focus on your breathing.

It doesn't mean you have to **like** waiting in line. But you'll make yourself miserable if you spend your time wishing you were somewhere else, instead of *right here*, waiting in line.

INVESTIGATE

What stories are you making up right now? Are you trying to convince yourself that the lines are long ONLY when YOU are in the store? Are you telling yourself that YOU are in a big hurry ... and OMG, why can't everyone else just hurry the \$%&@ up!?

Once you know what stories you're telling yourself, go back to your camera view from the first step. **Is your story true? Is there evidence to support it?** Is the DMV *actually* a place of government over-involvement bent on destroying personal liberties, or is this just a long line of people who need their tabs renewed?

Can you drop the story?

TEND

No one likes waiting in line. You may indeed be in a big hurry, with lots on your plate today, and perhaps an impatient toddler who's making

the wait unbearable. **Tend to yourself with compassion.** Simply tell yourself, *“Yes, this is hard right now. What can I do to be kind to myself?”* Maybe it’s finding a place to sit. Maybe it’s realizing you’ll simply have to return another day. Maybe it’s striking up a conversation with another person in line.

Tend to those around you, too. Long lines of customers can’t be very easy for the people who must service them. Send some kind thoughts — or even kind words, if you’d like — to the people who are doing the best they can to help you.

You don’t need to reserve this practice just for the times when you’re waiting in line.

You can practice WAITing while....

- you’re stopped at a red light
- you’re parked in the pickup line at school
- your children are getting their socks and shoes on (this could potentially be a 10-minute exercise)
- your browser window is loading
- the shower is warming up
- the coffee is brewing
- your FitBit is syncing (is mine the only one that takes FOREVER to sync? *Drop the story, Sarah, drop the story....*)
- your cafe latte is being made
- your table is being readied at a restaurant
- a friend is on their way to meet you
- your car is being serviced

- the crosswalk light is red
- the airplane is being prepped for boarding

Think of the possibilities.... You can transform 5 HOURS of your week into a meaningful practice!

So what are you waiting for?