



15 PRACTICAL WAYS TO FIND YOUR ZEN AT WORK

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh on the power of mindfulness.

“Those striving to be the best, to be at the top, have to work very hard to get there, and doing this, they suffer a lot,” he writes. “Once they reach the top, they must keep on striving to stay there, and often they suffer from tremendous stress and become burnt out. If we continue living like this, we’re heading not only towards self-destruction but also toward the destruction of our planet.” Thich says we should replace our fixation with fame, wealth, and competition with the three Buddhist powers: understanding, love, and letting go.

1. Start your day with 10 minutes of sitting in meditation.
2. Take the time to sit down and enjoy eating breakfast at home.
3. Remind yourself every day of your gratitude for being alive and having 24 brand-new hours to live.
4. Try not to divide your time into “my time” and “work.” All time can be your own time if you stay in the present moment and keep in touch with what’s happening in your body and mind. There’s no reason why your time at work should be any less pleasant than your time anywhere else.
5. Resist the urge to make calls on your cell phone while on your way to and from work, or on your way to appointments. Allow yourself this time to just be with yourself, with nature, and with the world around you.
6. Arrange a breathing area at work where you can go to calm down, stop and have a rest. Take regular breathing breaks to come back to your body and to bring your thoughts back to the present.
7. At lunchtime, eat only your food and not your fears or worries. Don’t eat lunch at your desk. Change environments. Go for a walk.
8. Make a ritual out of drinking your tea. Stop work and look deeply into your tea to see everything that went into making it: the clouds and the rain, the tea plantations, and the workers harvesting the tea.
9. Before going to a meeting, visualize someone very peaceful, mindful, and skillful being with you. Take refuge in this person to help stay calm and peaceful.
10. If you feel anger or irritation, refrain from saying or doing anything straight away. Come back to your breathing and follow your in- and out- breath until you’ve calmed down.
11. Practice looking at your boss, your superiors, your colleagues, or your subordinates as your allies and not as your enemies. Recognize that working collaboratively brings more satisfaction and joy than working alone. Know that the success and happiness of everyone is your own success.
12. Express your gratitude and appreciation to your colleagues regularly for their positive qualities. This will transform the whole work environment, making it much more harmonious and pleasant for everyone.
13. Try to relax and restore yourself before going home so you don’t bring accumulated negative energy or frustration home with you.
14. Take some time to relax and come back to yourself when you get home before starting on household chores. Recognize that multitasking means you’re never fully present for any one thing. Do one thing at a time and give it your full attention.
15. At the end of the day, keep a journal of all the good things that happened in your day. Water your seeds of joy and gratitude regularly so they can grow.