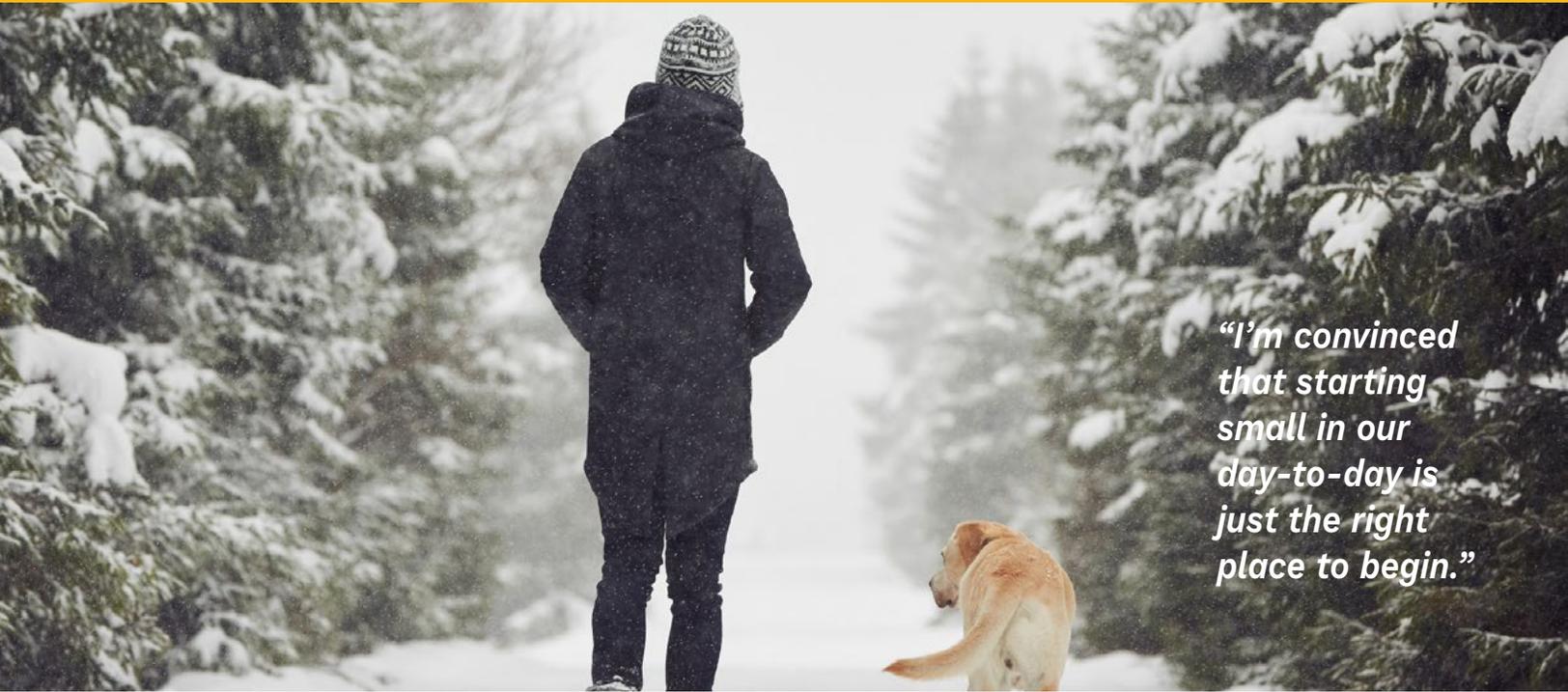




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“I’m convinced that starting small in our day-to-day is just the right place to begin.”

The Case for Mindfulness This Winter

By Kirsten Blume

I teach a mindful breathing yoga class, and still, amidst the rushed morning commute and back-to-back meetings, I myself forget to breathe intentionally throughout the workweek. The winter months can feel even more overwhelming, and motivation can wane amongst the weather shifts and shorter days. It takes a concerted effort to remind myself of the importance of mindfulness practices for my day-to-day well-being, especially in the postholiday season.

Research has reported that, for some people, **mindfulness meditation coursework may be as effective at reducing anxiety as prescription medication.**^{1,2} The article clarifies that it is not advocating for people to use mindfulness meditation instead of medication, and it also emphasizes that medication is an important tool for mental health and well-being. The author merely shares the research showing that mindfulness meditation worked for some participants, and medication

worked for others. In the study, one group was randomly selected to take a generic form of Lexapro (an antianxiety medication), while the other group was randomly selected to take an eight-week mindfulness meditation course. Both groups showed a 20 percent reduction in anxiety symptoms. The takeaway here is that both medication and mindfulness can have positive effects on mental health and well-being.

In the article, Oregon-based psychiatrist Dr. Joseph Arpaia acknowledges the challenge of spending 45 minutes a day meditating when you're a busy working professional—especially if your anxiety or stress is due in part to an overworked schedule, as is the case for many lawyers, judges, and law students. In that scenario, Dr. Arpaia makes the case for doing something simple—what he refers to as the “one-breath reset.” He describes this exercise as an inhale, lightly pursing your lips and tensing your muscles, then mindfully releasing the tension as you exhale slowly for four to five seconds.

Despite the busy workweek and waning energy of the winter months, could we look for mini opportunities to incorporate some mindfulness within our daily rituals? We could set a timer at noon to practice “one-breath reset.” We could make a hearty soup, a comforting meal, or a delicious baked good, focusing on the sight, smell, feel, and taste of each ingredient. Or we could venture out for a wintry walk, mentally noting what we observe (large green Western Red Cedar, a leaf blowing across the street, green grass swaying). I'm convinced that starting small in our day-to-day is just the right place to begin, and goodness knows, I need the reminder.

Wishing you and yours a slow and breath-filled new year. ●

– **KIRSTEN BLUME**
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¹ “Mindfulness Works Just as Well as Medication to Curb Anxiety, Study Finds,” Zoe Sottile, November 13, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/13/health/meditation-lexapro-wellness-trnd>.

² “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction vs. Escitalopram for the Treatment of Adults with Anxiety Disorders: A Randomized Clinical Trial,” Elizabeth Hoge, MD, Eric Bui, MD, PhD, Mihriye Mete, PhD, *JAMA Psychiatry*, Vol 80, No. 1, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2798510>.

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- Communicating for Understanding and Connection (Spring 2025)