

CREATIVELY EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS

A GUIDE

PHOTOGRAPHY & MINDFULNESS



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THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF PRESENCE

*The science on this is clear:
Spending more time in the
present moment leads to
greater happiness.*

Killingsworth and Gilbert discovered that most of us spend a lot of time distracted from the present moment by our minds roaming. In fact, the average individual spends 47 percent of his or her day daydreaming about something other than his or her present occupation.

Something extraordinary happens when we manage to enter the razor-thin moment of presence: concerns and resentments *dissolve*. We feel more at ease, serene, and at peace. To put it simply, we are happier.



HOW MINDFULNESS COMES IN

Mindfulness helps you step outside the endless chatter of your thoughts and see the world with fresh eyes, reinstating a sense of wonder (Williams & Penman, 2016).

Mindfulness simply means being aware of your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment on a moment-to-moment basis. It means paying attention to what is, rather than getting lost in our thoughts about the future or the past. Photography can be an effective way of improving mood and appreciation of everyday life (Kurtz, 2015). Attending to the present moment allows us to take use of the full range of opportunities available at any given time.

"IT'S THE SIMPLE THINGS IN LIFE THAT ARE THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY." - THE ALCHEMIST



WHAT IS MINDFUL PHOTOGRAPHY?

Rather than focusing on the technical aspects of capturing a great photograph, This method investigates photography as a mindfulness practice.

Mindful photography or contemplative photography is a practice where the camera becomes an extension of your mind, you don't have to stop, think, worry or analyze - you let your subconscious take over for once, and let it do its thing.

As a result, mindful photography gets you in an active state, takes you out of your head, and encourages you to connect to the world.

The camera is a tool for communicating with both the outside and internal worlds.



Mindful
Photography

TIPS
&
IDEAS

Inspired by "21 Days of Mindful Photography", Alexandria Searls (2019)

To feel *present* and
engaged in the
moment while you
take pictures requires
to *slow down*. Bring
awareness into the
present moment and
get in touch with the
fundamental *wonder*
of being *alive*.





1.

Reduce the noise.

In short, the more opportunities for distraction there are, the more important it is to develop a practice that focusses our attention in the current moment and minimizes the negative implications of our increasingly fragmented attention.

Mindfulness practice is, in many aspects, the antidote to a modern life marked by distraction, worry, anxiety, and other causes of perceived stress.

2.

Refresh the scene.

Refreshing the setting

When photographing a familiar sight, ask yourself:

- Is it possible for me to experience it for the first time?
- Is there anything in it that I haven't seen before?
- Can I look at it from a different angle?

Such questions can help you appreciate the moment and see what's in front of the camera lens for the first time.

Notice previously unseen details when analyzing the images afterwards.



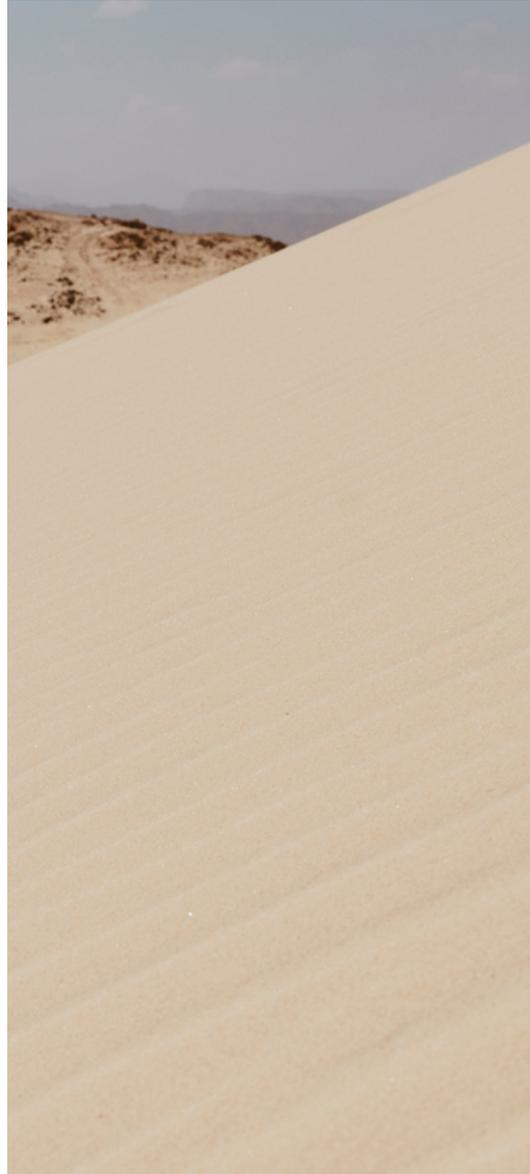
3.

Reduce the volume.

Taking limitless images is free with a contemporary digital camera. Reduce the amount of shots, though, to interact deliberately and become more present.

Consider setting a daily limit for the quantity of images you take.

Limiting yourself to a small amount of photos taken makes you more engaged in the moment.





4.

Accept what you capture.

When reviewing images, seek delight in what was recorded and the time in which it was captured, rather than technical difficulties.

Keep an eye out for the beauty. A accidental shadow or reflection may be as lovely as a sunrise or sunset.

Rather of seeking perfection or having false expectations, embrace what happens.

5.

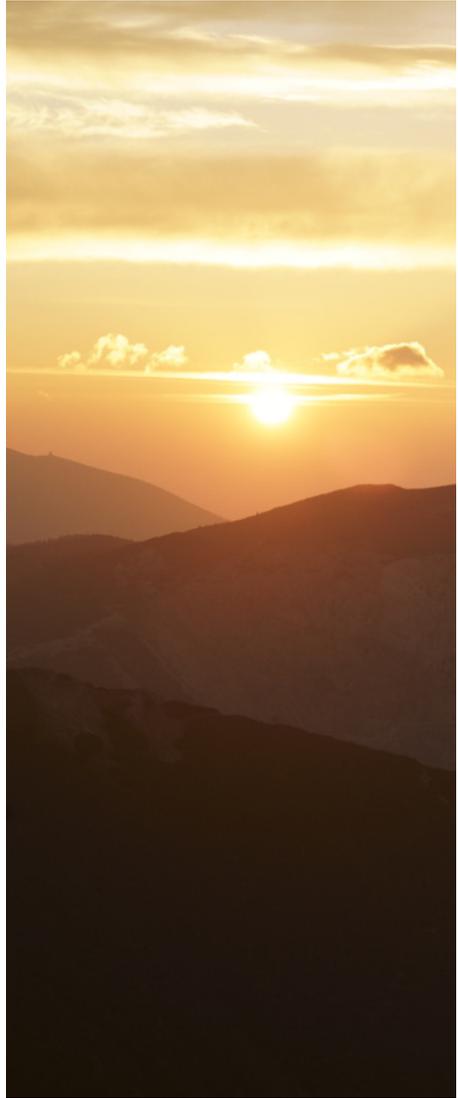
Travel without a camera.

While having a camera on your phone has many advantages, there is also the risk of constant interruption.

Turn off notifications or, even better, go to airplane mode if it is safe to do so and you are not expecting any urgent messages.

At first, avoid publishing the photographs to social media or even thinking about it.

Imagining others seeing your photos may decrease your joy and experience of connection as you photograph them.





6.

Weather and light.

Photographers often become preoccupied with capturing the right light or weather.

Strive to connect with the current moment, regardless of its conditions. Accept the weather and light as they come, whether the clouds are heavy and dark or the sky is pale and gray.

Accept how the weather makes you feel, including the sensation of rain or wind on your skin and the sounds in the trees, grass, or underfoot.

7.

**Stop for a moment
before taking a picture
and ask yourself:**

- Why am I taking this photograph?
- What is the story I want the image to tell?

Look for ways to capture both what is and is not perceived desirable.



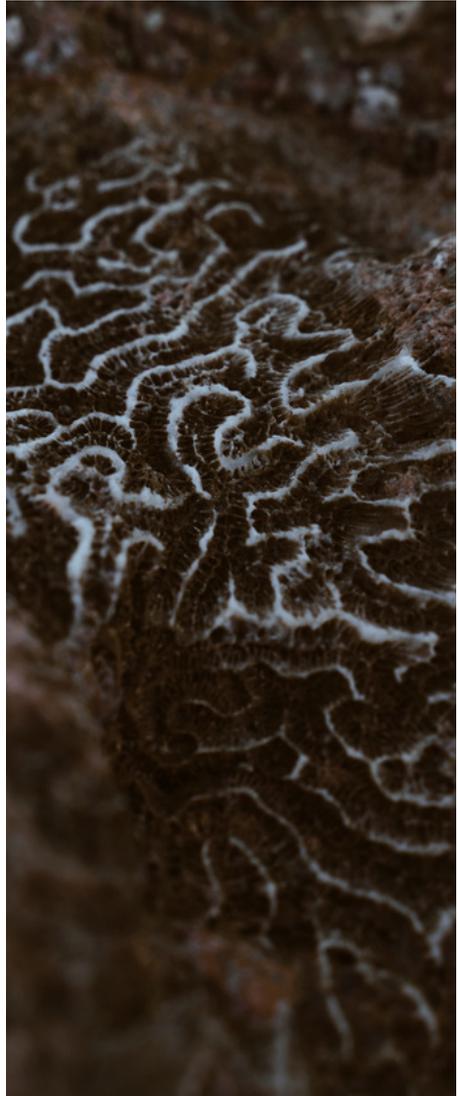
8.

Capture your day.

Take a picture of something around you at hourly intervals within the course of the day.

At the end of the day, look through the photos in chronological sequence.

- Do the photographs reflect your day?
- What is missing from the story?
- What else could have been captured?





9.

Oracle walk.

- What is my biggest strength?
- What should I do for a living?
- What qualities do I admire in that person?
- Is that piece of work finished?

Then attempt to answer the questions using only what you observe while walking.

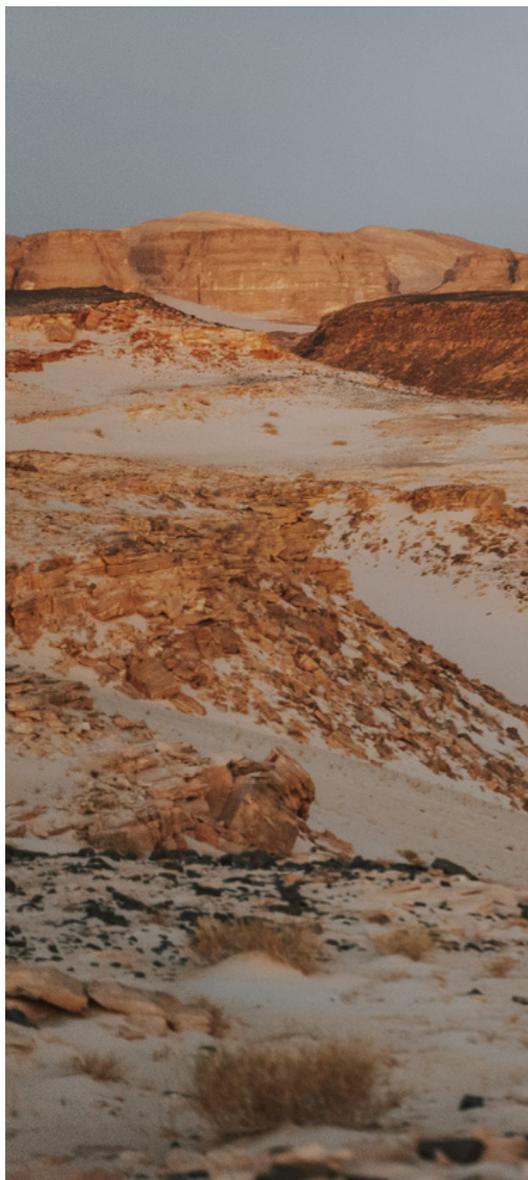
Form your replies from anything that tickles your curiosity. Those signs might be used figuratively to present an alternate perspective.

10.

Elements.

- Allow the ancient concept of four components to inspire your next photographic adventure.
- Photograph something that represents each element: earth, fire, water, and air.

Did you find yourself drawn to one element more than another? What colors are present for each element?



11.

BE HERE NOW.

Find a place where you can sit comfortably and safely for a while. Begin photographing what you observe.

Photograph changes that occur during the day, some rapid, such as moving traffic, and others gradual, such as changing weather or light. When you go home, review your photographs and experience the passing of time via your photographs.

How did you feel at the time, and how do you feel now when you see the photo?



If I can ask my own *questions*, try out my ideas, *experience* what's around me, *share* what I find;

If I have plenty of time for my special pace, a *nourishing space*, things to *transform*;

If you'll be my *patient friend*, my trusted guide, fellow investigator, partner in learning;

Then I will *explore the world*, *discover my voice* and tell you what I know in a hundred languages.

by Pamela Houk



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ABOUT THE PHOTO GRAPHER

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My name is Andreea-Elena Mercurean. I'm a travel photographer from Romania and I fell in love with the South Sinai desert ever since my first visit in 2019. Aside from witnessing the most incredible landscapes, I discovered a profound silence and clarity within, that has changed me as a person and inspires me as a photographer. I offer desert trips for photographers and creative programs that make you wonder.

