

*A solitaire game about watching the mind wander.*

## GAME RULEBOOK

Part of the

# Nevermind

Mindfulness Tabletop Experience

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## INTRODUCTION



As the world gets louder and faster, the dangers of perpetual distraction become more obvious. Yet the distractions coming from within us are potentially more harmful. We spend so much time inside our heads we fail to see the world around us clearly. Only by slowing down, recognizing our mind has distracted us and letting go can we truly experience life in its purest form.

## GAME OVERVIEW

Nevermind The Distraction is a solitaire card game based on the principles and experience of meditation. The Mind, (your A.I controlled opponent), attempts to keep you distracted with beautiful art and imagery causing time to be wasted.

Your goal is to realize when you've been distracted, let go and return the focus to your breath, clearing your consciousness and thwarting The Mind.

What follows is both Tug-of-War and Whack-A-Mole as you battle your mind for control of your wandering thoughts.



## USING THIS BOOK

There's a lot of information crammed into this tiny book, but you don't need to read it all to start playing. This game is pretty simple and you'll know more than enough to get started when you see the half-way staples. Dive into the game as soon as you feel ready and read the rest of the book as needed.

Sometimes it's helpful to step outside the game context and talk about meditation and mindfulness concepts more directly. Such notes will show up in a bubble like this one.

## COMPONENTS

### 8 Themed Distraction Packs

Several themed packs are included with the game. When combined, these packs create a visually unique tableau becoming the anchor for each individual experience.

The images and art in each 10-card pack have been carefully curated to provide a visually interesting, thought provoking stimulus while remaining neutral in tone to allow the widest possible range of unique personal connections.



80 cards  
8 Dividers

### ANATOMY OF A DISTRACTION PACK



**1 Art Index** Divider  
with Art index on face  
and Credits on back.



**1 Center Card**  
with Art on face and  
"breathe." on back.



**1 Title Card**  
with Art Index on face  
and Pack Title on back.

**8 Distraction Cards** with art on the faces and blank backs.



**16 Mind Cards**  
with 1 Divider



**16 Noting Tokens**



**8 Awareness Markers**  
3/4" glass flat marbles

## GAME SETUP

Putting yourself in the right frame of mind before playing Nevermind The Distraction can result in a more rewarding experience. Try to bring a light sense of wonder and curiosity. Instead of being laser-focused on "winning" just watch to see what happens. If your mind runs away with one, that's okay, it happens to us all. Just smile, reset the game and go for best two out of three!



To set up the game, follow the steps below. (see setup diagram at right)

1. **Choose Distraction Packs.** Select three (3) **Distraction Packs** to use for this game and set them out. We recommend using packs that match your mood, thoughts or plans for the day. Set each Title and Center card next to its pack and shuffle the remaining (8) cards (**do not shuffle the packs together!**).

2. **Build the Consciousness 'Grid'.** Shuffle the three (3) **Center** cards together and stack them face down ('*breathe.*' up) in the center of the play area.

Draw any combination of eight (8) **Distraction cards** (with blank backs) from the chosen packs. Shuffle them together and lay them out face-down in a 3x3 grid around the **Center** card.

3. **Build the Meditation Timer Deck.** Place the remaining cards from each pack on top of that pack's Title card, then stack them all together. You should have a stack of 19 cards with cards from each Distraction Pack grouped together, packs separated by their Title cards. Place this deck to the left of the Consciousness Grid leaving space below it for a discard pile.



Building the Meditation Timer Deck in this way comes in very helpful when packing up the game. It is much easier and faster to reassemble the Distraction Packs when the unused cards are still grouped together.

4. **Build the Mind Deck.** Locate the (16) Mind Cards. Both shuffle and randomly rotate the cards, then place the deck face down to the right of the Consciousness Grid leaving space below it for a discard pile.



5. **Build the Awareness Pool.** Locate the (8) glass Awareness Markers and set them within easy reach near the play area.
6. **Build the Noting Token Pool.** Separate the (16) Noting Tokens into their two types (*Thinking / Feeling and Remembering / Anticipating*). Place (4) of each type - **8 Tokens Total** - into a random stack, pile or bag (as preferred) and place it within easy reach near the play area.

The **Noting Tokens** allow for some flexibility in play style. Normally, a random token is drawn and assigned to a card the first time it is activated. For a more mindful experience, you can instead **choose** the token face that most closely represents what that card's imagery means to you. To set up for this, separate the tokens into handy piles by type.

7. **Flip Starting Thoughts.** Choose any two perimeter cards at random and convert them to Thought Status (p. 10-11) by flipping the card face up, placing a Noting Token next to it, and place an Awareness Marker on top of the token.

**Setup is complete. You are now ready to play Nevermind The Distraction!**

## KEY CONCEPTS

### THE MIND AND THE WATCHER

In *Nevermind The Distraction*, you take on the role of The Watcher while The Mind becomes your adversary. In this rulebook, references to **The Watcher** mean you, the player, while **The Mind** refers to your card A.I. controlled opponent.



**The Watcher** reminds us what is real. To stop letting the mind's storylines turn our thoughts against us. To let us experience life as it comes, in context. To slow down, let go of Distractions and **Breathe**.

**The Mind** is a wily, persistent critter, always looking to distract us. It likes to twist our thoughts, making life seem bigger, meaner and harder than it is.



### A JOURNEY IN STAGES

Like meditation, *Nevermind The Distraction* is presented in stages of increasing complexity. You should begin at **Stage One** and only progress to the next stage once gameplay feels comfortable and you have a solid grasp of the rules. You will know you are ready to advance when gameplay falls into a smooth rhythm, free of mistakes and uncertainty, execution almost becoming second-nature. At least one **Mental Stillness** win (p.8) is recommended. However, Stage One is not a *tutorial* or "stripped down" version and you are not required to advance. It is perfectly fine to stay at any stage you find enjoyable for as long as you like.

### MIND CARDS

The opponent A.I. is represented by a deck of (16) Mind Cards. When drawn on The Mind's turn, the card's filled in square is the **Mind Focus** showing which card on the grid The Mind acts on that turn. The filled-in dot is the **Noting Focus** which is not used until later stages of the game and can be ignored until referenced. When the Mind Deck runs out, both shuffle and randomly rotate the cards each time before resetting the deck.



### MEDITATION TIMER - "TIME PASSES"

The Meditation Timer Deck is built during step 3 of setup. In this rulebook, the instruction "**Time Passes**" means to discard one (1) card face down from the Meditation Timer Deck. Both Mind and Watcher actions can cause time to pass. Once this deck is depleted, the game is *immediately over* (see Game End p.8).

### AWARENESS

The glass markers represent your awareness and help designate the various card statuses. When a new Awareness marker is needed, it *always* pulls one from the breath (Center card) first, if possible. Finding none there, it pulls from the Awareness pool.



Awareness Marker

### NOTING TOKENS

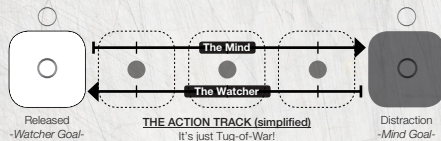
A **Noting Token** is assigned to each Thought card the first time it is triggered (p. 10-11). In Stage One, they only describe the *type* of thought a particular card evokes, hopefully making the images more personal to *you*. In later stages however, these stories, feelings, memories and plans have weight as each of these Distraction types must be approached in its own unique way.



Noting Tokens

### THOUGHT CARDS & THE 'STATUS/ACTION TRACK'

Each of the eight cards around the outside of the grid represents a thought you might have while meditating. These thoughts occur in varying stages of intensity (shown as statuses), from **Released** (which have no hold over us) all the way up to **Distraction** (the most problematic) with several steps in between. These steps are shown in a linear progression called the **Status / Action Track** (p. 10-11).



An instruction to advance a thought along the Action Track simply means adjusting the card's facing (up or down) and Awareness Marker position to reflect the next status up or down the progression. See page 10-11 for more.

Each time **The Mind** focuses on a particular thought card, it advances that card's status one step further along the Action Track toward **Distraction**. The Mind's ultimate goal is to waste time by keeping us distracted as long as possible. Remain distracted for too long and there are consequences!

On your turn, a **Watcher Action** on a card simply does the opposite, moving that card's status one step back along the Action Track toward being **Released**. Once a card is Released, a Mind Focus there no longer has any effect!

So it's really just Tug-of-War! The majority of the gameplay is simply finding the current state of a card on the **Action Track** and following the instructions shown there based on whether the action comes from you (*The Watcher*) or The Mind.

## GOALS AND THE GAME END

Very Important! Unlike this game, there is **no good or bad, winning or losing in meditation!** The *only* bad meditation is the one you didn't do!

**THE GAME ENDS IMMEDIATELY** once *either* of the following conditions occur:

### END GAME - CONDITION 1

The Meditation Timer Deck has been depleted. Flip the top **Center** card over.



Flip Center Card to its Other Side

Congratulations on remaining diligent and seeing your meditation through to the end! You may now let go of your focus on the breath and let your mind be free! Appreciate the achievement! (Gain 1pt toward your score below)

The winner is determined as follows:

Subtract the number of Distractions from the number of Released cards (adding 1pt per above). Find your score on the adjacent chart to see your rank.

If the resulting number is more than zero, **Congratulations, The Watcher Wins!**

### The Path to Enlightenment

- 9 Master - Lighting the Path
- 6-7 Priest - Teaching the Path
- 4-5 Monk - Walking the Path
- 1-3 Initiate - The Way to the Path
- 0-2 Asleep - Awakening Comes
- 3-4 Adrift - Surfing many Realities
- 5-6 Afraid - My Mind is Me

### END GAME - CONDITION 2

**All eight** Thought cards have Awareness markers on them. (*either Released or Distraction Status*).

The winner is determined as follows:

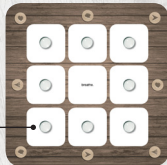
### MENTAL STILLNESS - Zen Mastery!

**All eight** Thought cards are **Released**. Congratulations, you have achieved Mental Stillness, a next-level Zen Master achievement! **The Ultimate Watcher Win!**

If you are comfortable with your skills at this point, you may now advance to the next Stage.

### TOTAL DISTRACTION - Loss of all Focus


**Any** Thought cards have the **Distraction** status (*face-up with an Awareness marker*) Total Distraction is achieved. The game is over, **The Mind** wins.



## OVERVIEW - HOW TO PLAY

**Nevermind The Distraction** is played over a series of consecutive rounds. Each round consists of a **Mind Phase** (the A.I.), then a **Watcher Phase** (the player). These rounds repeat until one of the End Game Conditions is met (p.8)


### MIND PHASE - *Skipped the first round of the game*

1. Play the top card from the Mind Deck by discarding it face-up onto a 'played' pile set just below. The filled-in square represents the **Mind Focus** (indicating which thought card on the grid is activated this round).
2. Find that card's current status on the **Status / Action Track** (p.10-11)
3. Follow the brief **Mind Action**  instruction listed *above* that status. (Generally advancing that thought one step closer to being a **Distraction**)

A card may only be activated **once per round** - The thought card indicated by the current face-up **Mind Card** is **not available for a Watcher action this round**. *The exception is when only a single card is in play (no other Watcher actions possible).*

### WATCHER PHASE

Take a **single** Watcher action on any card **not** the Mind Focus of this round.

1. Choose the thought card you want to work on this round.
2. Find that card's current status on the **Status / Action Track** (p.10-11)
3. Follow the **Watcher Action**  instruction listed *below* that status. (Generally advancing that thought one step closer to being **Released**)

Possible Watcher Actions (p.10-11): **Notice • Acknowledge • Focus • Let Go**

## STAGE ONE - BEGINNER'S MIND

The purpose of Stage One is to familiarize you with the **Status / Action Track**. The steps between the Distraction and Released statuses are actually small and simple. You will quickly find you have these actions memorized and no longer need to refer to the **Status / Action track**. Do keep in mind the following rules as you go:

- **Time Passes** (p.6) on a Distraction (*Mind*) as well as on a Let Go (*Watcher*).
- Mind Focus on Subliminal cards can **steal Awareness** from your breath (p.7).
- Remember **End Game Condition 2**. Stay diligent so you don't lose all focus!

Eventually, gameplay will develop an easy cadence as the rounds flow together. Once you can play an entire session accurately without referring to the rulebook and have achieved at least one Mental Stillness win, you may progress to **Stage Two**.

# GAME PLAY - STATUS / ACTION TRACK

Locate the activated card's status below, then follow the **Mind** action above, or **Watcher** action below it.

## Mind Action

No **Mind Action** is taken.

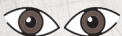
Proceed to Watcher Phase.

*Exception unlocked at Stage Two*



### Released Status

The card is face down and has an Awareness marker on its back.



## Mind Action

Advance card **directly** to **Thought** Status.

(Flip card face up and place an Awareness Marker on Noting Token)

*If no token, see **First Thoughts** at right*



### Subliminal Status

The card is face down and has no Awareness marker on or near it.



## Mind Action

Advance card to **Thought** Status.



(Flip card face up)



### Acknowledged Status

The card is face down and has an Awareness marker on its Noting Token.



## Mind Action

Advance card to **Distraction** Status.



(Move its Awareness Marker to card face) +

**Time Passes.** (p.6)



### Thought Status

The card is face up and has an Awareness marker on its Noting Token.



## Mind Action

**Time Passes.** (p.6)

*Additional steps unlocked at Stage Three*



### Distraction Status

The card is face up and has an Awareness marker on its face.



breathe.

## Focused

Center Card Status  
Occurs after a **Focus** action. The Center card is face down with an Awareness marker on it. Unless **Focused** is lost at the next Mind action, (see Awareness p.7) a **Let Go** action must be made on the next Watcher turn.

## FIRST THOUGHTS and Noting Tokens



Remembering / Anticipating

The first time a Mind Action would reveal a Thought, a Noting Token is assigned to that card. This is done by randomly drawing one from a bag or pile, then choosing the side that best represents the imagery on that thought to you. (See p.5 for Mindful variety)

## LET GO

Reduce card to **Released** Status.



Move Awareness **only** from a **Focused** Center then, **Time Passes** (p.6)

## FOCUS

Reduce card to **Subliminal** Status



by moving its Awareness to **Center** card, giving it the **Focused** Status

## ACKNOWLEDGE

Reduce card to **Acknowledged** Status.



(Flip card face down)

## NOTICE

Reduce card to **Thought** Status.



(Move Awareness onto Noting Token)  
*Exception at Stage Five*

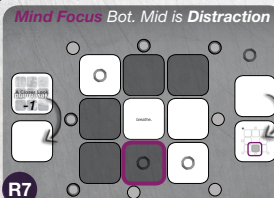
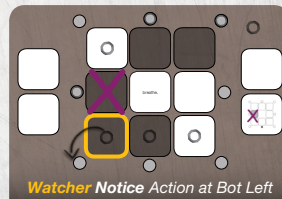
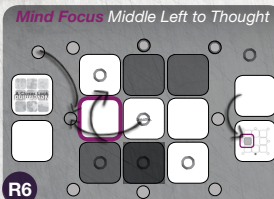
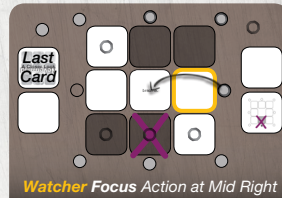
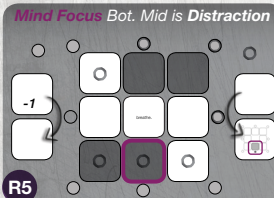
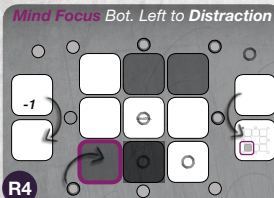
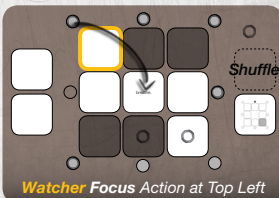
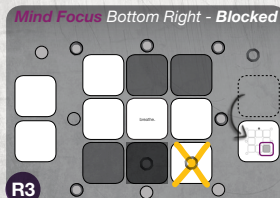
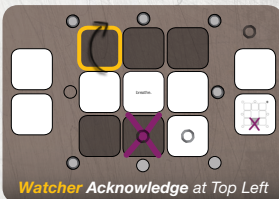
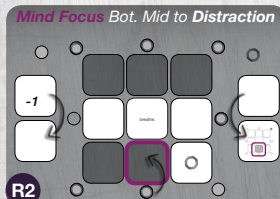
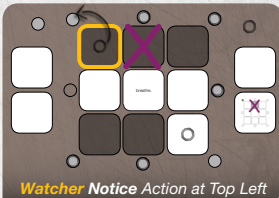
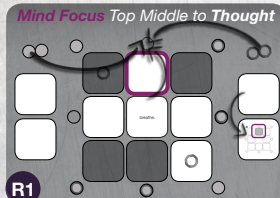
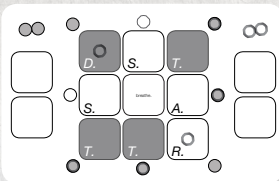
No Watcher Action is necessary.

*New Watcher action unlocked at Stage Four*

## STAGE ONE - PLAY EXAMPLE

The following seven rounds of game play occurs in the middle of a game (shown at right) and illustrate all of the actions available by both **The Mind** and **The Watcher**.

Most key concepts and Stage One possibilities are included as well as End Game Condition 1 and scoring.



## CONTINUING THE JOURNEY



Now that you understand the base framework of the game, the importance of noticing when you've been distracted and letting go, we can add a few more layers to the experience.

In these next stages, additional rules are added based on a card's **Noting Token**. Previously only narratively indicating the type of a thought, now each of these types has its own unique influence on game play and overall game strategy.

*Noting is a technique used in meditation in which an acknowledged distraction is sort of 'labeled' in a very general way before returning the attention to the breath. This helps create some space and objectivity and can lead to valuable insights about the mind.*



## STAGE TWO - MONKEY MIND

*"My mind is way too busy and won't quiet down, so meditation clearly isn't going to work for me." This is exactly like saying your grass is too long so a lawn mower is obviously not going to help.*

From this Stage forward, the game is played including the following additional rule.



Cards with a Thinking token assigned to them have a little harder time keeping their **Released** Status. If a card has this token and the **Released** Status the Mind action advances it back to the **Thought** Status unless **both** cards immediately adjacent are also **Released**.

The example below uses Round 3 from the Play Example (p.12) to illustrate this rule.



## STAGE THREE - LIFE IS NOW



*It's easy to get caught up in planning for better days or be seduced by woulda-shoulda-coulda. But real life happens only in the present moment. If the past and future exist only within the mind, why live there?*

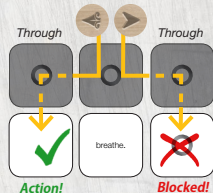
From this Stage forward, the game is played including the following additional rules.



Remembering Anticipating

Cards with either of these tokens assigned to them have a way of bouncing the mind onto other things. If a card has one of these tokens and the **Distraction** Status, first **Time Passes** normally:

Then the Mind focus moves to the **next available** card **clockwise** (for **Anticipating**) or **counter-clockwise** (for **Remembering**) around the grid:

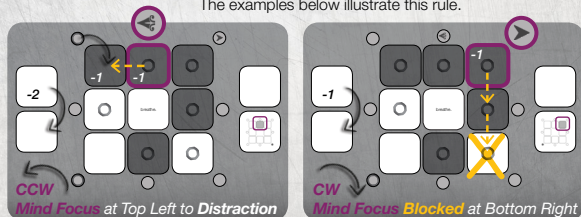


This rotational focus is **blocked** by a card with the **Released** status (nothing happens), and passes through another card with the **Distraction** Status.

If not blocked by a card with the **Released** status, take a normal Mind action on the next available card.

Follow the normal rules for any second **Mind Action**. This can cause multiple things to happen in the same turn. As normal, on The Watcher's next turn, the face up Mind discard indicates the only card that cannot be acted on.

The examples below illustrate this rule.



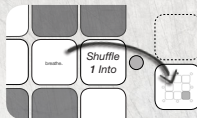


## STAGE FOUR - A DEEP BREATH

From this Stage on, this powerful but potentially risky Watcher action is unlocked.

### Preparing the Deep Breath

Each time the Mind Deck is shuffled during play, the player may choose to add one of the three Center cards from the grid to the Mind Deck before shuffling. At least one Center card must remain in the grid, so only two can be used for Deep Breaths.



There must be at least (1) card with the **Released** status to take a **Deep Breath**.

During normal play, when a Center card in the Mind Deck is first revealed:

1. Take the Mind Action indicated on the face up Mind Card as normal.
2. Decide whether or not to take the **Deep Breath**:

**Yes** - (verify there is at least 1 **Released** card) Remove that Center card from the Mind Deck and game. Then start the **Deep Breath** action below.

**No** - Discard the Center card normally on the next Mind turn, getting a free turn.

### The Deep Breath Action

1. **Choose a card** with the Released status and move its Awareness Marker to the grid Center card (like a Focus action).
2. **Count all the cards** with the Distraction and Released status and draw **up to** that many cards from the Mind Deck (*without rotating them*) into your hand.
3. **Play each card** from this hand by taking the following steps *in order*:

*Cards in hand may be played in any order but each card must be fully played (both Mind Focus and Noting Focus steps) before moving to the next card.*

- a. **Mind Focus Step** - Locate the Mind focused card on the grid as normal.



The Mind Focus

- If Mind Focus is on a card with the **Released** status - Take a single available **Notice** or **Acknowledge** action on the grid.
- If Mind Focus is on a card with the **Distraction** status - **Time Passes** (discard a card from the Meditation Timer).
- If Mind Focus is on any other card - Nothing happens. Skip the **Noting Focus Step** and discard that Mind Card.

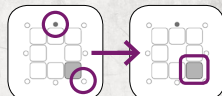
*Refrain from purposely taking a deep breath (or any other specific breath) during a real meditation. The point is to observe the breath, not influence it.*

- b. **Noting Focus Step** - Locate the Noting Focus on the Mind Card.



The Noting Focus

If the token at the Noting Focused location matches the token type at the Mind Focused location, change that card to Thought status. Discard this Mind Card.



If these match...

This card to Thought status.

4. **Clean Up** - Once all Mind Cards in hand are played, Move the Awareness Marker on the Center card back to its original card. Then, **Time Passes**.

**Example Deep Breath**

2 = up to 4  
Draws 3

Card 1 Card 2 Card 3

- 1 Left middle Awareness to Center
- 2 4 total Distraction / Released player chooses to draw only 3 cards into Deep Breath hand.

3a -1

3b Match! Card 2 Played 1st

3b No Match! Card 3 Played 2nd

3a -1

3a -1

Card 1 Played 3rd

3a -1

3a -1

3a -1

4 Deep Breath Clean Up

## STAGE FIVE - CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING

Emotions can be tricky both in and out of meditation. The important thing is to remember to pause and observe. Usually, once some time has passed, you realize the mind's stories had triggered or influenced those feelings.

From this Stage forward, the game is played including the following additional rule.



Cards with the Feeling token assigned to them can be much more distracting and harder to deal with. Once a card with this token has the **Distraction** status, the Watcher's **Notice** action cannot be used on it. Distractions on these cards can only be removed as part of a successful **Deep Breath** action. (p.16)

## ADD IN SOME NARRATION...

Like Daniel San in *The Karate Kid*, it turns out you weren't just waxing cars and painting fences this whole time, you were also learning meditation skills.

Reading this book so far, you may have found yourself wondering why it seems to use an awful lot of unnecessary concept-related vocabulary. For instance, why are there four different names for what could easily be called one "Watcher Action"?

The answer is if you use the names of the actions and components to internally "narrate" what is occurring on the table, you're subconsciously developing a skill set for what you would actually do inside your head during a real meditation session! Try it. Close your eyes, pretend your thoughts are cards and don't worry about keeping score...

for example:



Notice when I've been distracted by memories of literature homework.

### NOTICE → ACKNOWLEDGE → FOCUS → LET GO

that I've been distracted by a wandering mind.



the achievement, and my intention to remain diligent.



and return my awareness to my breath.



of thoughts pulling me out of the present moment.



## INCREASING DIFFICULTY

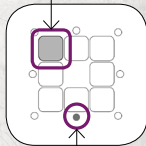
If you don't find *Nevermind The Distraction* to be enough of a challenge at Stage Five, consider playing with the following variant to increase the difficulty:

### Super Monkey-Mind Variant

Every round, during the Mind Phase, after taking the normal Mind Action per the Mind Card, additionally take a **second** Mind Action as follows:

- Use the Noting Focus to find the Noting token type (Thinking, Feeling, etc...)
- Take a second Mind Action on any card with a matching Noting token type (player's choice). All other rules stay the same.

1st Mind Action on this card



2nd Mind Action on any card with a Noting Token matching this one.

## MORE RESOURCES

It's called "Practice" for a reason.

Thanks for playing my game. My biggest hope is that this introduction may have inspired you to look a little further into the practice of meditation, or at the very least, maybe cleared up a misconception or two. These are just a few of the many resources I found most helpful during my own journey into mindfulness.

IOS App: **Headspace** (inspired this game)  
 Books: *The Mind Illuminated* by John Yates  
*The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle  
 Online: **Mindful.org**  
**Freemindfulness.org**  
**Ten Percent Happier Podcast**  
 for more, visit us at [NevermindCardGame.com](http://NevermindCardGame.com)

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## CREDITS

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Cover photo: Patrizia08 (Pixabay) Stock images: Pixabay under CC.

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# QUICK-REFERENCE CHART

Find the Status of the card being activated, then take its corresponding Phase Action.

## MIND PHASE ACTIONS

## Card Status

## WATCHER PHASE ACTIONS

### Time Passes

(discard 1 from Timer)

Stage Three add:  
*Remembering Token*  
rotate focus CCW

*Anticipating Token*  
rotate focus CW



Distraction

### NOTICE

Reduce card to **Thought**:



Move marker

Stage Five: *Except Feelings*

Advance card to  
**Distraction** Status:



Move marker  
and **Time Passes**



Thought

### ACKNOWLEDGE

Reduce card to  
**Acknowledged** Status:



Flip card

Advance card to  
**Thought** Status:



Flip card



Acknowledged

### FOCUS

Reduce card to  
**Subliminal** Status:



Move marker to Center

Advance card to  
**Thought** Status:



or



(Place token on first reveal)  
Flip card and Add marker



Subliminal

### LET GO

Reduce card to **Released**:



Move marker from Center  
and **Time Passes**

No Mind Action  
can be taken.



Stage Two:  
*Thinking tokens need both  
neighbors Released*



Released

No Watcher Action  
is necessary.

Stage Four:  
*May take Deep Breath*