

# **Mindfulness**

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## **What is Mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is about being fully aware of whatever is happening in the present moment, without filters or the lens of judgment. It can be brought to any situation. Put simply, mindfulness consists of cultivating awareness of the mind and body and living in the here and now. While mindfulness as a practice is historically rooted in ancient Buddhist meditative disciplines, it's also a universal practice that anyone can benefit from. Being mindful means taking yourself off "automatic pilot" and observing what goes on in and around you, including your feelings, thoughts and behaviors.

## **How do you practice mindfulness?**

Intentionally choose something upon which to focus your attention, be it the texture of a fabric, the experience of eating, or the meanderings of your mind. Taking the observer perspective, focus your attention on the details of your experience, noticing with all your senses, and not allowing yourself to be judging of these experiences.

### **Remember:**

#### **1. Non-judgmentally**

Do not evaluate

Accept each moment, whatever it may be

Do not judge your judging

#### **2. One-mindfully**

One thing at a time

Let go of distractions

#### **3. Anchored**

Keep your attention in the moment

You may have to reconnect to each moment\

As soon as you notice you are not in the moment – you are back in the moment.

## **Mindfulness of the Breath**

Find a quiet safe space to begin your practice. Take time to settle into a sitting position either on a straight back chair or on a cushion on the floor. It is helpful to sit up so your spine is self supporting.

As best you can, allow your back to be comfortably erect. If sitting in a chair, place your feet flat on the floor with your legs and arms uncrossed. If on the floor sit up erect and as comfortable as you are able. If you feel comfortable closing your eyes you may do so, if you do not feel comfortable closing your eyes, gently lower your eyes.

As you settle into your seat take a few slow deep breaths. Once you settle in do not force your breath, begin to observe your breath. Notice as you inhale and exhale the qualities of your breath. Is it slow and deep, fast and shallow, or a comfortable not forced rhythm? Notice if you are breathing from your chest and/ or your abdomen. You may gently place your hands on your chest and abdomen feeling the rise and fall of your abdomen. As you focus on your breath become aware of any sensations that you are experiencing. Notice if your mind wanders and gently bring your attention back to your breath as you inhale and exhale. You may even say to yourself- on each in breath- INHALE and on each out breath- EXHALE. You may begin to notice the slight pause between one in breath and the following out breath.

Again your mind may wander from focusing on your breath, notice where it wanders to: a thought, a sensation, and an emotion, a sound. This is perfectly ok- this is what the mind does. When you notice your mind is not on your breath, acknowledge it and gently bring your attention back to your breath. Notice once again, each in breath and each out breath.

However often you notice that the mind has wandered, and it will likely happen over and over again, as best you can, gently bring your attention back to the breath and simply resume following the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each inhalation and each exhalation.

Continue with this practice for 5 minutes, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience in each moment, using your breath as the anchor point to gently reconnect with the here and now each time your mind wanders.

Practicing mindfulness on a regular basis can be helpful physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Remember to be gentle and non-judgmental with yourself!!!

*May you be at Peace*

**Mindfulness resources:**

**Jack Kornfield: A Path with Heart**

**JonKabat-Zinn: Wherever you go, There You Are**

**Jon Kabat-Zinn: Full Catastrophe Living**

**Bhante Guarantana: Mindfulness in Plain English**

**Websites:**

[www.mindfulnessstapes.com](http://www.mindfulnessstapes.com)

[www.dharma.org](http://www.dharma.org)

[www.umassmed.edu/cfm](http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm)

# MINDFULNESS

- Practice of living in the present moment.
- The art of engaging reality on a moment-to-moment basis as key.
- We watch our thoughts and emotions come and go, but we do not cling to them.
- Primary focus is to maintain a calm, attentive, nonjudgmental state of heightened awareness.
- Freeing the mind from its habitual attachment to thoughts, feelings and other mental phenomena.
- Mindfulness offers us a way to perceive reality in a more direct, intimate manner. Through mindfulness, our life experiences become richer and fuller. We learn to see more clearly, listen more attentively, taste more acutely, smell more discerningly, and touch more fully.
- Mindfulness is applied to both bodily actions and the mind's own thoughts and feelings.
- Becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings and sensations may not sound like an obviously helpful thing to do, however to do this in a way that suspends judgment and self criticism can have surprising results.
- People report finding inner strengths and resources that help them make wise decisions about their health and life in general.
- Most of us frequently find ourselves being "swept away" by the current of thoughts and feelings, worries, pressures, responsibilities and just wanting things to be different from how they are right now. This can be particularly powerful when faced with pain, difficulties and illness that defy all our attempts to find a solution or to feel better. Feeling stuck in this way can be draining.
- Mindfulness can help us to work directly with the struggle we sometimes have relating to life's experience and in doing so can dramatically improve the quality of our life.
- Mindfulness-based approaches are intended to teach people practical skills that can help with daily and ongoing life challenges and physical and psychological health problems.
- Mindfulness does not claim to rid us of illness or difficulty-in fact, there's no guarantee that it will change your life at all. Yet it can help us adopt a more helpful and accepting attitude towards the challenges we face. It has a way of opening us up to new possibilities, of seeing that we are not defined by our situation, and that we can, amidst the challenges of our lives, quickly and simply access the massive reservoir of internal resources we all have available to us.