

Creating Health & Nutrition

Mindfull or Mindful?

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not excessively reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around us. Mindfulness expert Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as openheartedly as possible.” Kabat-Zinn is known as the “father of mindfulness,” and is founding executive director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He created mindfulness-based stress reduction, a research-based program that uses a combination of mind-

fulness meditation, body awareness, and yoga to help people become more mindful and better cope with stress, anxiety, pain, and illness. Mindfulness means living in the moment and being fully aware of our inner and outer experiences. When you are mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them as good or bad. When it is cultivated intentionally, it is referred to as deliberate mindfulness. When it spontaneously arises, it is referred to as effortless mindfulness.

Mindfulness Components

Present moment awareness

Attitude of nonjudgmental curiosity

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a mental practice based on focusing on the sensations of the breath and body while maintaining a relaxed state of mind. In recent years, meditation has been the focus of clinical research trials and has been shown to have numerous beneficial effects, including stress reduction, relaxation, and improvements to quality of life.

During formal meditation practice, distractions will arise and the meditator is taught to acknowledge these infringing thoughts, and nonjudgmentally return his/her attention back to the breath. Mindfulness training cultivates moment-to-moment awareness of the self and environment.

Regular practice can actually alter the brain's physical structure and functioning. This is a result of neuroplasticity, or the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming

new neural (brain transmitter cell) connections throughout life. Research suggests that states experienced during mindfulness meditation eventually can become effortless traits over time. Thus, the longer you practice mindfulness meditation, the more you may benefit from its effects.

Regular practice cultivates three core skills:

1. Concentration: the ability to focus and stabilize one's attention
2. Sensory clarity: the ability to keep track of the components of sensory experience as they arise in various combinations, moment by moment
3. Equanimity: the ability to maintain mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation



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Examine Your Choices

Problem/Issue	What I Do Now	What I Plan To Do	How I Will Do It
I am always stressed out.	Eat comfort foods to feel better.	Take a 30-minute walk outside over lunch and practice being mindful.	Listen to the sounds of nature, look around at the plants and trees, be present in my surroundings.
I can't fall asleep at night.	Watch TV or play on my phone.	Do a mindfulness meditation before bed.	Download a recorded meditation and listen to it/practice it while lying in bed.

Example goal: For the next 7 days, I will practice a mindfulness meditation every night for 10 minutes before bed.

Major Benefits of Mindfulness

Stress: Research has shown that mindfulness is not only associated with feeling less stressed, it is also linked with decreased levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Mindfulness-based stress reduction is a research-based program that has been proved to reduce stress, increase relaxation, and improve overall quality of life.

Emotion regulation: There is evidence that mindfulness can facilitate emotion regulation in the brain. Studies show that meditation may elicit positive emotions and minimize negative affect, helping us to more efficiently control our emotions.

Empathy and compassion: Research suggests that mindfulness practice can enhance our ability to experience empathy and compassion toward others, in turn strengthening interpersonal relationships. This could be due to the nonjudgmental attitudes that are cultivated in mindfulness practice.

Depression and anxiety: Studies have shown that mindfulness can lead to a significant decrease in negative psychological symptoms associated with depression and anxiety like stress, rumination (repetitively thinking about a problem or situation without taking action), and negative attitude.

Mindfulness Resources

Books:

- *The Art of Happiness* by the Dalai Lama and Dr. Howard Cutler
- *Search Inside Yourself* by Chade-Meng Tan
- *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation for Everyday Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Audio Recording:

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center
<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>

Phone Apps:

- Breethe - Meditation & Music
- Calm
- Headspace Meditation
- Mindfulness Daily

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Ways to Be More Mindful Every Day

- Practice mindfulness during routine activities. Try to be more present during your normal daily routine. For example, pay more attention while brushing your teeth, taking a shower, eating breakfast, or driving to work. Focus in on the sight, sound, smell, taste, and feel of these activities instead of completing them on autopilot.
- Put your phone on

airplane mode. Stop checking your phone every five minutes! An easy way to do this is to put your phone on airplane mode, for example, when you are out to dinner with friends or engaged in a conversation. It is much easier to be present in the moment without constant notifications from a cell phone.

- Connect with nature. Get outside! Take a walk in nature, whether that be in your neighborhood, at a park, in the woods, or

on the beach. Listen to the sounds of nature, look around, and be present in your surroundings.

- Schedule time. Set aside 15 to 30 minutes a day for meditation, yoga, art, or another mindful activity you enjoy. Be sure to remove all distractions while practicing this activity.

- Surround yourself with support. Get books, go online, or download phone apps to learn more and keep you motivated in the practice.