

# Mindfulness in everyday life



## What the fact sheet covers:

- What is mindfulness?
- How can mindfulness help?
- How do you practice mindfulness?
- Examples of mindfulness techniques
- Mindfulness books and apps

## What is mindfulness?

We practice mindfulness by maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and the surrounding environment. Mindfulness also involves bringing an attitude of curiosity, non-judgement and compassion to your experiences.

Jon Kabat Zinn defines mindfulness as: *"Paying attention; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally"* (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

## How can mindfulness help?

- Mindfulness reduces stress, anxiety and depression. (Mindfulness actually shrinks the brain's "fight or flight" centre, the amygdala).

- Mindfulness reduces insomnia, increases your sense of well-being, reduces lethargy and increases energy both mentally and physically.
- Mindfulness is also very effective for pain management.
- Mindfulness sharpens your memory and increases your focus and attention.
- Mindfulness increases empathy and compassion and improves relationships
- Mindfulness creates clearer, more focused thinking.
- Mindfulness improves self-belief and emotional resilience.





## How do you practice mindfulness?

There are two forms of mindfulness practice. The first is the formal practice of mindfulness, which is commonly referred to as meditation.

A meditation practice is commonly done sitting, usually with eyes closed, but can also be done lying down or even walking.

The informal practice is bringing a mindful awareness into anything and everything that you do. You can do the dishes mindfully, go for a walk mindfully, or eat mindfully.

## Examples of mindfulness techniques

### Mindful eating

This involves sitting down at a table and eating a meal without engaging in any other activities – no newspaper, book, TV, radio, music, or talking.

Now eat your meal paying full attention to which piece of food you select to eat, how it looks, how it smells, how you cut the food, the muscles you use to raise it to your mouth, the texture and taste of the food as you chew it slowly.

### Belly breathing

Find a posture that helps you remain relaxed and alert. Shift from doing to being. Focus on the breath as it enters your nose. Allow yourself to draw your attention to the inhale and the exhale. Now notice the smoothness of the breath and allow your awareness to stay with the length of the inhale and the length of the exhale. You can count for 3 seconds as you breathe in and

3 seconds as you breathe out, allowing your breath to be even and smooth. Continue for a few minutes. Now you can stop counting and return to the sensation of the breath as it comes in through your nostrils and out through your nostrils. Take your left hand and place it on your belly. Become aware of the breath as it moves through your nose, down your throat and into your belly. Notice how your belly rises as you breathe in and falls towards your spine as you breathe out. This is belly breathing.

Now we are going to lengthen the outbreath by slowing it down. The outbreath activates our parasympathetic nervous system which is our rest and digest. Some people like to count... so you may count 4 for your inbreath and 7 for your outbreath. Continue belly breathing with a slow exhale for a few minutes. If you would like, you can say the word relax to yourself as you exhale.....and really let go and let tension melt away. Let's go back to your intention and check in to see how you are feeling. Let's bring the practice to a close. Slowly become aware of your surroundings and noises inside the room and outside the room, and when you are ready, you can gently open your eyes.

### Belly breathing

Take a few slow deep breaths and notice:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste



## Mindfulness books and apps

### Books

- Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World  
By Mark Williams and Danny Penman
- Wherever You Go, There You Are  
By Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Full Catastrophe Living  
By Jon Kabat-Zinn
- The Mindfulness Breakthrough  
By Sarah Silverton
- The Way of Mindful Education  
By Daniel Rechtschaffen
- The Attention Revolution  
By B. Alan Wallace
- The Emotional Life of Your Brain  
By Dr Richard Davidson
- Mind, Brain and the Path to Happiness  
By Dusana Dorjee
- The Plastic Mind  
By Sharon Begley
- The Brain that Changes Itself  
By Norman Doidge
- Brainstorm  
By Daniel Siegel

- The Mindful Brain  
By Daniel Siegel
- The Miracle of Mindfulness  
By Thich Nhat Hanh
- The Mindful Way to Study: Dancing with your Book  
By Jake Gibbs and Roddy Gibbs
- Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life  
By Thich Nhat Hanh
- Radical Acceptance  
By Tara Brach
- Search Inside Yourself  
By Chade-Meng Tan

### Apps

- Headspace
- Smiling Mind
- Calm
- Buddhify
- Insight Timer
- Stop Breathe Think
- 10% Happier
- Waking up



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