



# Mindfulness

“In a Nutshell”

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**Mindfulness** is about training yourself to pay attention in a specific way. When a person is mindful, they:

- Focus on the present moment
- Try not to think about anything that went on in the past or that might be coming up in future purposefully concentrate on what is happening around them
- Try not to be judgmental about anything they notice, or label things as ‘good’ or ‘bad.’

We spend so much time thinking over stuff that has happened in the past or worrying about things that may happen in the future, that often we actually forget to appreciate or enjoy the moment. Mindfulness is a way of bringing us back to experience life as it happens.

**When you are mindful, it:**

- Helps clear your head
- Helps you be more aware of yourself, your body and the environment
- Helps to slow down your thoughts
- Slows down your nervous system
- Helps you to concentrate
- Helps you relax
- Can help you cope with stress.

**Who is mindfulness for?**

Mindfulness is something that everyone can develop, and it is something that everyone can try. It has been practiced for thousands of years, with origins in Eastern philosophy, and over the past 40 years, it has been taken up in western societies. People can increase their mindfulness in everyday life, through activities like meditation and yoga, or even by simply paying more attention during regular activities like walking, driving or something as basic as brushing your teeth.

**Why build mindfulness?**

There is a lot of evidence on the many benefits of mindfulness; it can help to:

- Relieve stress
- Improve sleep
- Manage depression and/or anxiety
- Be less angry or moody
- Improve memory
- Learn more easily
- Solve problems more easily
- Make you happier
- Be more emotionally stable
- Improve your breathing
- Reduce your heart rate
- Improve your circulation
- Cope with pain

When you are mindful, you get to experience living life in the moment. There are a lot of different strategies you can use to build mindfulness. Find out what they are, and what to do if you are finding it hard.<sup>7</sup>

### **This could be useful if....**

- You have trouble focusing
- You often find yourself worrying about things
- You want to relax

### **Why being mindful is useful**

When you are mindful, you are able to pay attention to the present moment, and not get swept up thinking about the past or worrying about the future. It means you get to enjoy every little moment of life as it happens, and the impact of this on your mental and physical health is really positive.

### **How to be mindful**

There are a lot of different things you can do to help yourself be more mindful. Some of these things are easy and you can incorporate them into everyday life, others require a bit more time and some training.

### **Mindfulness meditation**

Mindfulness meditation involves you sitting quietly and focusing on your breathing or a word or phrase you repeat quietly. Allow thoughts to come and go and try not to judge these moment to moment experiences – the point is to ‘notice, and let it be’.

In mindfulness meditation you learn to remain aware of what is happening and what you are feeling in that moment. Sometimes you like it, sometimes you dislike it, or are confused about it, but mindfulness meditation helps you recognise passing thoughts and feelings without identifying with or owning them. As you become more and more mindful you will start to notice what your mind focuses on and if you start to worry or wander, bring it back to the present moment.

### **What if I am finding it difficult?**

Becoming more mindful involves retraining your brain, so it is something that does take a bit of time. It can be quite difficult to focus for long without your thoughts wandering off somewhere else, and it is also difficult not to get frustrated when that happens.

However, the key here is really perseverance. The more you practice mindfulness, the better you will become. Most people really struggle at first. When you are building how mindful you are using a particular strategy, get into the habit of practicing every day – even if it is just for a few minutes. Find a time and place that works for you and eventually, you should start to improve.