

## What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment, with openness, curiosity, and willingness to being with what is. Most of the time, people think about what happened in the past, like what you said, or thought.

Or they think about the future, the worst possible scenario, worrying, and exaggerating.

Being mindful means your mind is on what you are doing. It's the opposite of rushing or doing too many things at once. To be mindful, you can slow down and take your time. Do one thing at a time. Focus on what you're doing in a calm way. Pay attention with purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. It may be what you're feeling, hearing, or anything else you notice.

Mindfulness is an invitation back into the present moment. A place of ease and well-being. In mindfulness practice, you bring your awareness to the present moment body sensations, thoughts, or feelings without clinging to it, resisting it, or trying to change it.

Mindfulness involves holding the focus of your attention lightly, with gentle acceptance, like a butterfly resting in the palm of your hand, until it moves away on its own. You attend to the ongoing flow of experience: gently observing as it rises and falls.

Do you have to relax? There is no need to “relax” and no need to achieve anything. Just learn to pay attention to what is happening in the here or now. There's no special place of calm you have to reach and it's not about clearing your mind, it's just an honest and kind way to look at what you're experiencing at this moment.

There's growing research showing that when you train your brain to be mindful, you're actually remodeling the physical parts of your brain.

Mindfulness helps you stress less, concentrate better, understand yourself more, sleep better, get along with others, and make good choices.

## Mindful activities

By trying mindfulness activities—like deep breathing, meditating, mindful listening to others, being creative, or spending time outdoors—you can train your brain to pay attention to what's happening right now and feel better. Check out these examples.



## **MINDFULNESS MEDITATION**

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First, find a comfortable and safe space. Take a few minutes to just sit quietly. Take a deep breath.

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Close your eyes or look at the floor, or half close them, and gaze on the floor in front of you without looking around.

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You can sit in a chair, feet on floor, hands resting on your knees, sitting up or leaning back. Support your back.

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You can also sit on the floor, cross your legs or put a cushion to the front to push knees to the floor.

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If you're sleepy, you can also do this standing up. If you're not tired, you can lay down. That makes you sleepier, so it is harder to meditate.

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Take a few deep breaths. As you settle into a comfortable position, start by paying attention to your breathing. Notice your belly as you breathe, feeling it as it rises with each inhale and falls back with each exhale. Allow this movement in your belly, the rising and falling with each breath, to become a trusted anchor for your mind if and when it wanders off, bringing your mind back to this moment, to this breath, to your belly. Practice this quietly for a minute.

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Notice what are your thoughts right now. What sounds do you hear around you? What emotions are you feeling right now? What sensations do you feel in your body? Let those thoughts and feelings go, like you're changing the channel on the TV.



**MUSIC CAN ALSO BE A GREAT ENTRY POINT INTO THE WORLD OF MINDFULNESS.**

## **MUSIC APPRECIATION:**

Music can also be a great entry point into the world of mindfulness.

To practice, head to a space where you won't be interrupted and pick one of your favorite songs. Put on some headphones, get comfortable and then tune into the music.

Ask yourself:

How does it feel in my body as I listen?

What different sounds can I hear that I might not have noticed before?

How does my breath change with the rhythm of the music?



**PRACTICE MINDFUL WALKING REGULARLY TO ENHANCE FOCUS, AWARENESS, CONNECTION, AND RELIEVE STRESS.**

## **CONNECTING WITH NATURE**

Begin by standing still and becoming aware of your body. Take a few deep belly breaths to bring your awareness into the present moment. Feel the sensation of each breath as it enters and leaves your body.

As you start to walk, pay attention to how your body feels. Notice the sensations in your legs, feet, and arms with each step you take.

If you find your mind wandering, gently bring your attention back to the present moment with the next step you take.

Take time to appreciate the beauty of the natural world around you. You could notice the sounds of birds chirping, the rustling of leaves in the wind, and the warmth of the sun on your skin.

