

Slow down, live in the present moment, accept and manage emotions

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a tool that anyone can use at any time to bring awareness to everyday activities. We often find ourselves ruminating on the past or worrying about the future; mindfulness is a practice that focuses our attention on what is happening in the present moment without making judgements about what we notice. Mindfulness encourages us to slow down, accept things as they are, positively cope with problems or difficulties, and simply appreciate what is in our life right now.

Why Does Mindfulness Matter?

Mindfulness can have a positive impact on our thoughts, behaviours and overall mental well-being. Regular mindfulness practice strengthens our ability to stay in the present moment without our attention wandering. Practicing mindfulness teaches us to accept more of our experience without judging it, which has been shown to help people live more fulfilling lives. When confronted with a challenge, mindfulness helps us slow down and take the time to consider different options by looking at the situation in a more neutral way.

Research shows that benefits of mindfulness may include:

- Reduced rumination
- Stress reduction
- Improved working memory and focus
- Less emotional reactivity
- More cognitive flexibility
- Greater relationship satisfaction

Seven Things Mindful People Do



What Does Mindfulness Look Like?

Here are some ideas to try mindfulness:

Bring mindfulness to your meals – Instead of playing on your cell phone or watching the television while eating, really focus on what you are eating and enjoy each bite.

Bring mindfulness while commuting – Turn off distractions and stay in the present moment on your commute to work or while walking your dog.

Bring mindfulness into chores – Purposefully focus your attention on what you are doing. Watch for physical sensations and thoughts that come up. What does the soap smell like, feel like, and look like?

Bring mindfulness to work – Check in with yourself a few times throughout the day. What are your thoughts like? How does your body feel?

Bring mindfulness into your relationships – When you are talking with friends and loved ones in person, put away the cell phone or other distractions. Really listen to what they are saying and pay attention to how it makes you feel. Enjoy each other's company without judgements or expectations.

Bring mindfulness to observations – Really focus your attention on something you see or pass every day. Take note of what emotions or thoughts emerge.

Bring mindfulness into sensations – Spend a minute simply following your own breath. When your mind wanders or thoughts intrude, take note and gently guide your attention back to your breath. With practice, you can try to challenge yourself by adding more time.

Getting Started

Mindfulness is an important tool that takes practice and persistence to work at its best. By practicing regularly, we develop skills we can use in our daily lives. Start slowly by committing to a few minutes of focusing on your breath once a day or by eating dinner mindfully for a week. It may be a bit challenging at times and it is natural for your mind to wander. Every time your mind wanders and you return to the present, you are building your mindfulness skills. Remember to be curious about your feelings and reactions when practicing mindfulness.

Features of Mindfulness

- **Observation** and description of things inside and outside without judgement
- **Focus** all of your attention on the task and one particular sensation, like the sensation of the breath
- **Compassion** for ourselves and others
- Staying in the **present** moment, and experiencing the present moment fully