

What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4)

Simple Formal Mindfulness Practice

(Source: <http://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/ways-to-become-mindful>)

1. Sit on a straight-backed chair, or cross-legged on the floor.
2. Focus on an aspect of your breathing, such as the sensations of air flowing into your nostrils and out of your mouth, or your belly rising and falling as you inhale and exhale.
3. Allow yourself at least a minute of time to pay attention to your breath in one of the suggested ways.
4. As you notice your breath, you will also notice a bombardment of thoughts. This is normal! Allow your attention to return to your breath. Every time a thought interrupts you, simply notice and return your attention to your breath.
5. To expand your awareness, you can move your focus from your breath to the sensations around you, such as sounds or your body.
6. Embrace the distraction of your thoughts are part of any mindfulness practice. Do not judge them. Refocus your awareness, which is the anchor of your practice. Allow the thoughts to continue to come and go

Other types of formal mindfulness practice include: guided meditations (see listed websites) and yoga.

Informal Mindfulness Practice: Extend your practice to your every day life, making the intention to be as fully present to the moment at hand as you are able. Begin by anchoring yourself in your breath. Pay attention to what you see, hear, touch, taste, as fully as you can. Practice mindful: showering, dressing, eating, walking, waiting (in car or in line).

Approach mindfulness as a practice, whose benefits grow the more you engage in it.

What Are the Benefits of Mindfulness? (See the following website for a good list:

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>)

Mindfulness Strategies for Handling Stress (Chroniak)

1. Allow yourself to become aware, as soon as possible, that you are experiencing your characteristic symptoms of stress: Acknowledge to yourself (even out loud) that you are getting stressed. Allow yourself to feel the sensations in your body, your thoughts, and emotions.
2. Tune into your body: Do a scan of your face, neck, shoulders, stomach, etc. to try to notice where and how you are experiencing stress in your body. Breathe into these parts of your body. If your hands are clenched, open them slowly. If your jaw is tight, gently smile.
3. Anchor yourself in your breath: Take a few slow and deep mindful breaths.
4. As you relax and welcome calmness, pay attention to your thoughts and feelings: See if you can take in the bigger picture and think of creative ways to respond to whatever is stressing you.

Practice as if your life depended on it, as in many ways, it surely does. For then you will be able to live the life you have – and live it as if it truly mattered (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 249).

Befriending Meditation: *May (I, you, we) all be free from suffering. May (I, you, we) all be as happy and healthy as it is possible for us to be. May (I, you, we) have ease of being (Williams and Penman, 2011, p. 198).*

References

Chroniak, C. (n.d.). *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program Workbook*. Chicago: The Insight Center for Stress Management and Integrative Psychotherapy.

Greater Good Society. What is Mindfulness? University of California, Berkeley. Downloaded from: <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>

Kabat- Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion.

Komaroff, A (Ed.). (2014). *Ways to Become Mindful*. *HEALTHbeat Harvard Publications*. Downloaded from: <http://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/ways-to-become-mindful>

Shapiro, S. L., Brown, K. W., & Biegel, G. M. (2007). Teaching self-care to caregivers: effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction on the mental health of therapists in training. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 1*(2), 105.

Williams, M., & Penman, D. (2012). *Mindfulness: An eight-week plan for finding peace in a frantic world*. New York: Rodale.

Suggested Readings:

Kabat-Zinn, J., & Hanh, T. N. (2009). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Random House LLC.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 10*, 144-156.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2007). *Arriving at your own door: 108 lessons in mindfulness*. New York: Hyperion.

Oliver, Mary (2008) "The Summer Day" from *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures: Poems and Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Segal, Z. V., Williams, J. M. G., & Teasdale, J. D. (2012). *Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression*. Guilford Press.

Suggested Websites:

www.aacfm.com (Ann Arbor Center for Mindfulness – local offerings of Mindfulness programs)

<http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/> - website for the book by Williams and Penman, which includes free downloads of the guided meditations.

<https://insighttimer.com/> (download this app (for free or deluxe for small fee) to encourage a meditation practice)

<http://www.mindful.org/>

www.mindfulexperience.org (database for mindfulness research)

www.mindfulnessstapes.com (Jon Kabat-Zinn's website)

<http://www.soundstrue.com/shop/welcome> (great resource for free podcasts and products to inspire your practice)

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/> (has many resources related to spirituality and overall health)

<http://www.thankyouformeditating.com/mindfulness/mindfulness-practice/> (learn more about informal and formal mindfulness practice)

<http://www.topsite.com/best/mindfulness> (lists the top 10 mindfulness websites)