



If mindfulness were a pill, we should all be taking it!

It's easy to get caught up in feeling worried about things spinning out of your control. That could be something happening in your life in the near future, or maybe you're regretting something you said last week. Practicing mindfulness is one way to address this anxiety and stay focused on the present.

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a natural quality that we all have. It's available to us in every moment if we take the time to appreciate it. When we practice mindfulness, we're practicing the art of creating space for ourselves, space to think, space to breathe, space between ourselves and our reactions.

What are the benefits of practicing mindfulness?

You can think of mindfulness as focused relaxation. Luckily, it doesn't take much to feel a positive impact. In fact, you can start practicing mindfulness right now. Think about how going for a great walk makes you feel somehow brighter or empowered.

In addition to helping with stress relief, practicing mindfulness can help you feel calmer and more relaxed.

Studies have also shown that by breathing better and more deeply, like when practicing mindfulness, your overall health can be improved. More oxygen flowing to your brain is always a good thing and can improve your concentration and ability to solve problems.

How to practice mindfulness meditation

One of the easiest ways to practice mindfulness is through meditation. This is easier than you think. You may think that you have to commit to meditate for 10, 15 or 20 minutes, but you can start with a one-minute meditation.

- Find a quiet place in the house, preferably a room with a door you can close to shut out any noise.
- Make sure you are wearing comfortable clothing.
- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Rest your hands lightly on your legs, palms up or down, whichever you prefer.
- Begin by focusing on your breathing as you allow your mind to settle. Notice as you in and exhale; feel the air filling your lungs from top to bottom.
- Use your senses to become aware of your surroundings. What do you smell, see, or hear?
- Then ask yourself how you are feeling, physically and emotionally. Don't judge or attempt to label your responses. Simply observe and release your thoughts as they flow.
- If you find your mind wandering, and it will, gently redirect your thoughts back to the present moment.
- Finally, when you're ready to end your meditation, focus on your breathing again as you slowly open your eyes and bring the practice to a conclusion.

Practicing mindfulness on the go



You can incorporate mindfulness throughout the day, in both big and little ways. There are no hard and fast rules, like practicing for a specific amount of time. Rather, try to fit it into your day as best as you can. Once you start to feel its benefits, you'll likely find yourself making more time to practice.

- Curl up with a good book
- Walk the dog
- Watch the sunrise or sunset
- Write in your journal
- Plant flowers

How to start practicing mindfulness

- Picking and choosing from some of the above tips can help you start practicing mindfulness. If you're not drawn to a particular activity, don't try it. The goal is not to do everything. It's to find something that works for you. Maybe one tip feels better to you one day, while a more low-key option suits your energy level at another time.
- Getting to a point where you can stay focused in the present takes practice. But there's no right (or wrong) way to practice mindfulness. The trick, at least at first, is to set realistic goals.
- Take very tiny steps and make your goals accessible to guarantee that you'll be successful. When we set ourselves up for failure, we end up not moving in the direction we were hoping. It chips away at our sense of self – and then we don't want to do it anymore.
- Above all, be kind to yourself. If mindfulness isn't working for you out at the moment, tomorrow is always a new day.

If you need help with practicing mindfulness, contact our **Mental Health Services** on **014 590 1700** or alternatively talk to an **EAP Counselor (010 133 0525)** who is available 24/7 to give you guidance and support!

SOURCE:

Why Is Mindfulness Important?
20+ Reasons to Practice Today (positivepsychology.com)