

MINDFULNESS

For Stress Reduction

In today's world, no one is immune to feeling stressed. Eustress or positive stress can help motivate us to do well and get things accomplished. But if we accumulate stress and not manage it effectively or find an outlet for it, it can become chronic and have adverse effects on our minds and bodies.

Chronic stress has potentially harmful effects across the lifespan on the brain, on one's behavior, and our physical health and cognitive (thinking) abilities. It has even been shown to speed up biological aging at the cellular level, which can shorten the life span.

There are many ways to relieve or reduce stress. Some examples include exercise, laughter, reading, listening to music, getting outside in nature, talking with a friend, and deep breathing. Stress reducers just need to be something that helps us relax, are soothing and pleasurable, make us feel good, and are something we can build in our lives regularly.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is also a technique that can be used to ease the effects of stress. Mindfulness is paying purposeful attention to the present moment. Mindfulness researcher Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.”

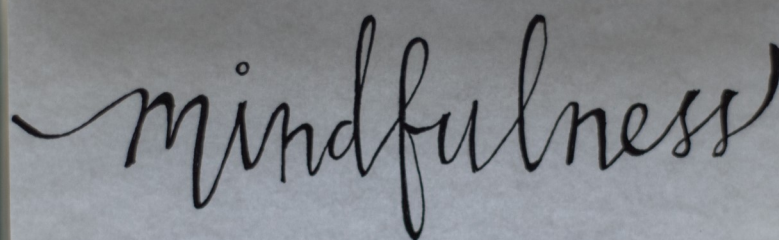
Although mindfulness originates in ancient Buddhist and Hindu traditions, it is not about spirituality or religion but is about concentration. The ultimate goal of mindfulness is to help quiet busy minds so you can effectively deal with stress by giving your full attention to what you're doing.

How is mindfulness helpful? Being mindful can:

- Give people more appreciation for life
- Assist with focus and attention
- Combat multitasking
- Reduce stress levels
- Improve working memory, emotional regulation, and well-being
- Enhance coping with distress and disability
- Reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, eating disorders and chronic pain
- Lower cortisol levels and blood pressure
- Increase immune response
- Decrease mind-wandering

How long before I see benefits?

Research has shown that the benefits of mindfulness can be seen in as little as a 15-minute session. According to a study in Psychological Science, just 15 minutes of focused-breathing meditation helped people make smarter choices. By reducing how much people focused on the past and future, this psychological shift led to better decision-making.



mindfulness



Reference

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MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES AND SCRIPTS

There are several ways to practice mindfulness. Since being mindful is the act of focusing on and experiencing the present, this can be applied to just about anything you do in life. If you need a little guidance at first, there are several types of scripts, videos, and audio files available online. You can find assistance for everything from paying attention to smell, sounds, walking, and even washing dishes!

The Basics of Mindfulness Meditation: Getting Started

1. **Have a seat** on the floor or in a chair, making sure to keep your back straight. Begin by taking a deep breath and close your eyes.
2. **Breathe normally** and focus on your breathing. Feel the air moving in and out of your lungs.
3. You will probably experience thoughts or distractions, but as you do, don't give them too much attention. Acknowledge that your mind has wandered and then move your **focus back to your breathing**.
4. Start by doing this a **few minutes each day** and then gradually increase your time, staying at a comfortable level.

Remember that practicing mindfulness is not only about being in the present but is also about dealing with distractions. As you practice mindfulness meditation, certain thoughts, memories, and feelings may appear in your mind, but the trick is to notice them in a detached way and not focus on them. You can accept those "distractions" without judging and dwelling on them, then get back to focusing on your breathing and meditation. Good luck in your practice.

Kabat-Zinn is called the father of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). He developed this program back in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center with the focus of helping patients cope with chronic pain. His idea was to teach patients mindfulness meditation techniques to refocus their attention so they could change their response to pain and reduce their overall suffering. Zinn's program has been so successful over the years that there are now over 1000 certified MBSR instructors teaching these techniques in almost every state and more than 30 countries. Also, more than 20,000 people have completed the MBSR 8-week program.