

A guide to mindfulness



Understanding mindfulness

Mindfulness is all about being present in the moment, being aware of the here and now. This includes being aware of your:

- Thoughts
- Feelings
- Body sensations
- Surroundings

Mindfulness has its origins in Buddhism, which may explain why mindfulness is often associated with meditation.

How to practice mindfulness

Our lives are often hectic and stressful. In recent years, mindfulness has become hugely popular for managing stress, as well as many other aspects of mental wellbeing.

There are lots of quick and straightforward ways to practice mindfulness throughout your day that may help you become more of your thoughts and feelings, which may in turn help you to manage them better.

You can practice mindfulness anywhere and at any time, and best of all you only have to spend a few minutes a day doing it to reap benefits. It can be helpful for anyone of any age, including children, and you don't have to be religious or spiritual to practice it. But most importantly, it's probably not the complicated thing you may think it is at all.

How can it help me?

Mindfulness can help you with:

- Feeling less overwhelmed
- Improve your sleep quality
- Change the way you think and feel about your experiences – especially stressful experiences – so that you think about them more positively
- Boost your ability to manage difficult situations
- Make wiser choices
- Reduce levels of anxiety, depression and stress



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- Reduce the amount of time you spend chewing things over in your mind
- Have greater compassion for yourself

Studies suggest mindfulness may have a positive effect on conditions such as:

- High blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Chronic fatigue syndrome and chronic pain
- Where depression is concerned, mindfulness may work just as well as antidepressant drugs
- It can be an effective tool in the treatment of addiction too

How can I learn mindfulness?

You can learn mindfulness techniques from books, face-to-face courses or online. But you don't have to do a course or read a book. Here are some different ways you can practice mindfulness during your day.

Mindful meditation

If you have a few minutes to spare and a quiet place to sit, try this simple meditation.

- Find a warm, quiet place where you won't be disturbed or distracted. Get into a comfortable position – but don't lie down, as you may fall asleep
- With your eyes either open or closed, start focusing on your breathing. Count your breaths, if you like, or repeat a soothing word every time you exhale. Try repeating the words 'calm', 'still', 'peace' or 'quiet', for instance
- Focus your attention on your body. Start with your feet and work your way right up to the top of your head, concentrating on each part and how it feels in that exact moment
- If other thoughts come into your head, bring your attention back to your breathing and let the thoughts gently flow back out again

Mindful brushing

It's so easy to let your mind wander while doing everyday things such as brushing your teeth. Instead, try to pay attention to how the toothpaste tastes and feels in your mouth, the sound of your toothbrush moving against your teeth, how the bristles feel when they touch your gums and how fresh your mouth feels when you've finished.

Mindful eating

When you sit down to eat, try switching off any distractions such as the TV, radio or your mobile phone, and avoid talking or reading the newspaper. Give your full attention to your food. How does it smell? What colour is it? What are the textures like? Is it hot or cold, and how does the temperature feel in your mouth? Chew slowly and really relish your meal. Finish eating when you feel satisfied – you don't have to clear your plate.

Mindful drinking

An ordinary activity such as making and having a cup of tea can also be practiced mindfully. Start by noticing how the kettle gets heavier as you fill it with water. Listen to the sound of the water as it runs from the tap and how the stream catches the light. Pay attention to the sound the water makes as it bubbles and comes to the boil. Then watch the boiling water pouring into your cup, noticing how the water changes colour when it comes into contact with the teabag and how steam escapes into the air.



Sit quietly to drink your tea and pay attention to the warmth of your cup in your hands. Take a sip and appreciate the taste – What flavours can you taste? How does the warmth of the liquid feel in your mouth? Take your time and try not to rush back to what you were doing earlier.

Mindful walking

The next time you go out for a walk, try to really notice what's going on around you. Think about the way the ground feels under your feet and how the wind feels on your face. Consider how you breathe as you walk – are you breathing more deeply and quickly than usual? Notice the buildings, your fellow pedestrians and the rest of your surroundings. What sounds can you hear? What does the sky look like?

Mindful commuting

Practicing mindfulness can help if you use public transport to get to work and home again too. Try to be conscious of the physical sensations in your body – are your muscles tense? If so, try to relax them. Look out of the window and pay attention to the scenery. Notice the rhythm of the movement of your transport. If you feel uncomfortable in overcrowded environments, try focusing on your breathing.

A bit more information for you

If you would rather talk to us about mindfulness (or anything else), please call our free helpline on 0808 801 0550. You can choose to talk to one of our telephone information specialists for practical information or counsellors for emotional support. If you prefer to email us, you can reach us at enquiries@ltcharity.org.uk

You can also read about mindfulness here:

Mindful

A not-for-profit organization aimed at 'anyone who wants to explore mindfulness'. There is a comprehensive coverage about mindfulness including how to practice at work.

www.mindful.org

NHS

An overview of mindfulness and its benefits for overall health.

www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness



The Licensed Trade Charity are available 24/7, if you'd like to talk about your situation, we can help you. Contact us for confidential, free of charge support. If you are experiencing any of the issues covered in this fact sheet, in the first instance call our helpline on:

0808 801 0550

Our Helpline Team will listen without judging and will work with you as best they can to achieve a positive outcome. If you prefer, you can email: enquiries@ltcharity.org.uk or visit our website at www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk, it's full of useful information about the kind of issues we know people who work in the licensed trade face.

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Note: This guide is not exhaustive. It has been produced by the Licensed Trade Charity to provide you with an overview of the issue in question. We are grateful to all specialist organisations who support our charity and are available to you should you be experiencing this particular issue.
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