

Practicing Mindfulness

Life can become busy quickly. Our minds may be thinking about what happened yesterday, worrying about what could happen tomorrow, or trying to keep track of everything that needs to happen today. Mindfulness is a way of bringing our attention back to what is happening **right now**.

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means intentionally paying attention to the present moment without immediately judging what we notice.

It does not require you to clear your mind or stop thinking. Thoughts will come and go. The goal is simply to notice them and gently return your attention to the present.

You might notice:

- What you can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch
- Sensations in your body
- Your breathing
- Thoughts passing through your mind
- Emotions you are experiencing

You do not have to decide whether these things are good or bad. For a moment, you are simply noticing what is there.

Why Practice Mindfulness?

When our thoughts become caught in worries, memories, or possibilities, it can be difficult to focus on what is actually happening around us.

Practicing mindfulness can help us become more aware of our thoughts, feelings, surroundings, and reactions. With practice, it may also help with stress, anxious thoughts, concentration, emotional reactions, and our ability to refocus our attention.

Mindfulness is not about ignoring difficult thoughts or feelings. Instead, it gives us an opportunity to notice what we are experiencing before automatically reacting to it.

A Thought Is Just a Thought

One important part of mindfulness is learning to observe our thoughts rather than automatically accepting everything we think as fact.

A thought can feel very real without being an accurate reflection of ourselves, another person, or a situation.

Instead of immediately reacting to a thought, try noticing it:

“I am having the thought that...”

That small change can create space between **having a thought** and **believing a thought**.

A Simple Mindfulness Practice

You can practice mindfulness almost anywhere.

Choose something happening in the present moment and give it your attention. You might focus on your breathing, the feeling of your feet against the floor, sounds around you, or something you can see.

Notice what is happening without trying to change it.

When your attention wanders—and it probably will—notice where your mind went and gently bring your attention back.

That return to the present moment **is part of the practice**.

Mindfulness in Everyday Life

Mindfulness does not have to mean sitting quietly and meditating. Ordinary activities can become opportunities to practice.

While eating, notice the smell, flavor, temperature, and texture of your food.

While walking, notice how your feet meet the ground, how your body moves, and what you see and hear around you.

While showering, notice the temperature of the water, the scent of the soap, and the feeling of the water against your skin.

During a conversation, practice listening to the other person instead of preparing your response while they are still speaking.

Even taking a few moments to notice your breathing can be a mindfulness practice.

When Your Mind Wanders

Your mind wandering does not mean you are doing mindfulness incorrectly.

You may suddenly realize that you are planning dinner, replaying a conversation, worrying about tomorrow, or thinking about something that happened years ago.

Simply notice it.

Then bring your attention back to what is happening now.

You may have to do this many times. Each time you notice that your attention has wandered and return to the present, you are practicing mindfulness.

Start Small

Mindfulness is a skill that develops with practice. You do not need to begin with long meditation sessions or completely change your routine.

Try starting with **one or two minutes**.

Choose one ordinary part of your day and practice being fully present for it.

The goal is not to perfectly control your thoughts. The goal is to become more aware of where your attention is—and learn that you can gently bring it back.