

## What is Meditation?

*Various forms of introspective practices and mental techniques used to develop positive states and traits of mind through disciplined training.*

## What is Mindfulness?

*The trait, state, or practice of non-judgmentally focusing with receptive awareness on sensations, feelings, thoughts, or external stimuli that arise in the present moment.*

### Different Forms of Meditation:

- *Yoga:* Breath control while mindfully moving the body into various postures.
- *Tai Chi & Qi Gong:* Relaxing the body & mind using slow and smooth body movements in rhythm with the breath.
- *Prayer:* Contemplation of God.
- *Mindfulness:* Sustaining curious attention on whatever arises in the present moment with an attitude of acceptance.
- *Focused Attention:* Complete focus on an anchor point in the present moment.
- *Visualization:* Using the imagination to bring positive changes to the mind and body through imagery.
- *Loving Kindness Meditation:* Method of developing an accepting and loving attitude towards oneself and others.
- *Walking Meditation:* Mindfulness of the body's movements while walking.
- *Sleep Meditation:* Eases and calms the mind in preparation for restful sleep.
- *Mindful Exercising:* Entering a flow state of connection with movement and purpose while exercising.
- *Eating Meditation:* Eating with a deliberate attitude of awareness and appreciation while loosening the grip of habitual mindless eating.

## Are you mindful or mindless?

- Do you notice shifts in your emotions and their effect on your thoughts and behavior?
- Do you often operate in 'autopilot' mode?
- Do you notice changes in your body such as in your muscles in your breath rate?
- Do you become easily distracted or do you tend to become completely absorbed in what you're doing?
- Does your mind wander off thinking about the past or future?
- Can you easily describe your emotions, experiences, or perceptions with words?
- Do you criticize or judge any of your thoughts, emotions, or perceptions as abnormal or wrong?

### Health Benefits of Meditation:

- Builds resiliency while releasing accumulated stress.
- Reduces chronic pain and inflammation.
- Induces relaxation while reducing muscle tension.
- Improves mood and intensifies positive emotions such as happiness and compassion.
- Increases self-awareness while bringing awareness to habitual patterns of thoughts and behavior.
- Develops clarity and peace of mind.
- Benefits relationship with self and others.
- Alleviates anxiety and depression.
- Enhances memory and boosts concentration.
- Increases blood flow and lowers blood pressure.
- Strengthens immune system.
- Improves sleep hygiene.
- Helps with management of addiction cravings.
- Raises energy.
- Increases brain volume in parts of the brain correlating to positive emotions.

**Meditation Techniques:****Grounding Exercise**

1. Sit comfortably with eyes closed.
2. Take deep breaths in for 4 seconds through the nose, then out for 4 seconds through the mouth, 7 to 8 times.
3. Then while breathing naturally through the nose, check in with the physical senses one after another.
  - (a) Feel the surfaces of the body in contact with the chair and ground.
  - (b) Notice any smells or lingering tastes.
  - (c) Hone the hearing in on the individual background noises.

**Mindful Body Scan Meditation**

1. Mentally sweep the body from head-to-toe by slowly moving the attention from one body part to another.
2. Notice and feel pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensations such as tension, pain, itching, etc.

**Focused Attention Breathing Meditation**

1. Without taking control of breathing, notice its qualities (shallow, deep, etc.) as it cycles in and out naturally.
2. Feel the sensation of the breathing at a specific anchor such as the abdomen, chest, or nostrils.
3. Sustain concentration on the raw feeling your respirations.
4. When your mind wanders, gently restore focus back on the breath without judgment.

**Loving Kindness Meditation**

1. Begin by mentally projecting your breath in to the heart area of your chest.
2. Elicit positive feelings within yourself by remembering an experience that made you feel happy.
3. Visualize someone you admire experiencing positive feelings of joy while smiling.

4. Visualize someone you deeply care about experiencing positive feelings of joy while smiling.
5. Visualize a neutral person you don't like or dislike experiencing positive feelings of joy while smiling.
6. Visualize a difficult person in your life experiencing positive feelings of joy while smiling.

**Meditation Tips:**

1. Experiment and find what works for you.
2. Establish a routine by finding a consistent time to practice.
3. Use the same quiet space without distractions.
4. Sit in a comfortable position, relaxed yet alert in a chair or on a floor cushion.
5. Start with 5 min or less, then 10, and then 20 min up to 2 times a day.
6. Be accepting of yourself and don't force expectations.

**Integrating Mindfulness:**

Integrate mindfulness into your daily life outside of meditation by remembering to:

**Stop** what you are doing.

**Take** a few deep breaths.

**Observe** internal and external state.

**Proceed** more mindfully.

**Resources:**

- *Headspace: Meditation App*, 10 for 10
- *Fully Present* by Susan Smalley & Diana Winston
- *Buddha's Brain* by Rick Hanson
- *Mindful-based Mind Fitness Training*: <http://www.mind-fitness-training.org/>
- *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction* by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Overdrive.com*: free meditation ebooks & audiobooks for Navy and Army
- *YouTube.com*: hundreds of recorded guided meditations and classes
- *Yoga Nidra*: guided meditation for sleep