

Pain Foundations

# Mindfulness

## What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is moment-to-moment awareness of our senses, thoughts and emotions.

*“It is a regular, disciplined practice of paying attention to the present without trying to fix or change anything.”*  
- Jon Kabat-Zinn

## How can mindfulness help?

Studies tell us that mindfulness can help you:

- Reduce your pain
- Manage your pain better
- Improve your concentration and attention
- Reduce your anxiety and depression
- Manage stress better
- Make your immune system stronger
- Reduce your chances of heart disease

## What are attitudes of mindfulness?

**Non-Judging.** Pay attention to your experience in an accepting and non-judging way, without thinking the experience is good, bad, right or wrong.

**Patience.** Understand and accept that sometimes things must happen in their own time. Try not to rush through a moment to get to a better one.

**Beginner’s mind.** Be open to new possibilities. Look at an experience as if it is the first time.

**Trust.** Develop trust in yourself, your feelings, and your intuition. You are your own best guide.

**Non-striving.** Be yourself. See things as they are right now. Do not try to change or be in a better place.

**Acceptance.** Accept things as they are in the present. Do not spend energy resisting or denying what is true.

**Letting go.** Work on letting go of some of the thoughts, emotions, and sensations you are holding. Letting go is also called non-attachment and is key to mindfulness.

## How do I practice mindfulness?

You can practice mindfulness through guided meditations, a body scan, and mindful movement like Yoga or Tai Chi. You might want to try the mindfulness activities explained in the next section.

You can include mindfulness in daily activities by taking a pause to reflect on the moment. The more you practice the better you get at it!

You do not need special equipment. All you need is your time and a space.

## Mindfulness Activities

You might want to find a few minutes in your day to try one of the following mindfulness activities.



### Sitting meditation

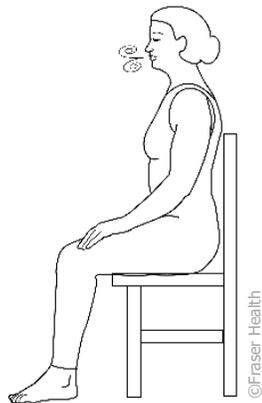
The first time you try meditation, you might want to set a timer for 5 to 10 minutes. As meditation becomes more natural, you can increase the amount of time you do it.

Go to a quiet space. Sit in a comfortable position. This could be in a chair, on a sofa, cross-legged or on a meditation cushion.

When you are ready, bring your attention to your breathing. Notice the air move in and out of your lungs. Try to keep your attention on your breathing.

It is natural for your mind to wander and pull your attention away from the present moment. Your mind might start to plan your grocery list, get bored, or start to feel uncomfortable. This is okay and it is normal.

- Try to watch your thoughts and feelings as if they are clouds, just floating through your awareness.
- Let them exist without attaching to them or judging them.
- Then if you can, try to bring your attention back to your breathing.



### Grounding with the 5 senses

Use this exercise to ground yourself and bring yourself into the present moment. The goal is to give your attention to each of your 5 senses.

**What are 5 things you see?** Maybe you can see an object, light reflecting off a wall, or anything in your surroundings.

**What are 4 things you feel?** Maybe you can feel your clothing, the surface you are sitting on, or the ground under your feet.

**What are 3 things you hear?** Maybe you can hear the birds chirping, a car driving by, or a clock ticking.

**What are 2 things you smell?** Maybe you are outside and can smell grass or flowers. Maybe you are in your home and smell coffee, or dinner cooking.

**What is 1 thing you taste?** What does the inside of your mouth taste like? Maybe it tastes like toothpaste, coffee, or your lunch.



## Mindful drinking

The goal of mindful drinking is to see what you notice about the drink and the process of drinking it.

Choose a hot or cold beverage you enjoy. Sit in a quiet, comfortable place.

Before you pick up your drink, notice what it looks like resting on the table in front of you. For example, observe its colour, size, and shape.

Pick up the cup and notice how it feels in your hand. You can bring your attention to the weight, the temperature, the texture of the cup against your hand.

Next, hold the cup to your nose and see if it has a smell. Maybe you can feel the heat or coolness of the drink on your face when you hold it close. Maybe you notice how the liquid moves in the cup.

Finally, slowly take a sip from the cup. Notice the movement of your mouth, lips, tongue, and hand as you sip. Pay attention to the taste and temperature of the liquid in your mouth. As you swallow, can you feel your muscles working? Can you feel the liquid moving down your throat?

Continue to sip slowly on your drink. Focus all your attention on the drink for as long as you would like.



## Body scan

To do a body scan, pay attention to all the physical sensations in your body without trying to change anything. The goal of a body scan is simply to notice what is present. While doing a body scan, you might or might not become relaxed.

Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. You might notice coolness, warmth, pressure, pain, something else, or nothing. Slowly move your attention up your body into your calves, thighs, hips, pelvis, stomach, back, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and head.

Try to give yourself enough time in each body area to explore all the sensations present.

Once you scan from your feet to your head, you might want to scan back down from your head to your feet.

Go slow. Explore any sensations present.

**What stood out to me in this section?**

**Questions I still have on this topic**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Resources

### Videos

Look online for videos and audio by Jon-Kabat Zinn, Vidyamala Burch, Tara Brach, and Elisha Goldstein.

### Websites

#### [Palouse Mindfulness](#)

Take an 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) course online, free of cost. Available in English, Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Portuguese.



#### [UCLA Health](#)

Listen online to a variety of introduction meditations, free of cost. Read the text for each meditation. A 6-week online class is available for a fee.

#### [Mindful.org](#)

Read various articles on mindfulness. Offers training, courses, and Mindful Magazine for a fee.



### Apps

#### Headspace

Explore this guide to everyday mindfulness. Offers hundreds of guided meditations to help with various areas such as sleep, productivity, and exercise. First 10 sessions are free of cost.

#### Breathr

Explore many guided meditations and practice exercises. Teaches mindfulness to beginners. Designed in Vancouver. Free of cost.

#### Insight Timer

Meditation app that includes a timer, guided meditations, courses, and calming music.

### Books

**You Are Not Your Pain** by Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman

**The Mindfulness Solution to Pain** by Dr. Jackie Gardner-Nix

**Full Catastrophe Living. Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness** by Jon Kabat-Zinn

**Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics** by Dan Harris