

Mindfulness – Finding Peace in a Changing Environment

Mindfulness is the psychological process of purposely bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment, without judgment. People develop mindfulness through the practice of meditation and exercises such as centering or grounding, deep breathing, body scans, and other types of training that help draw the attention to the present moment. (Definition adapted from Wikipedia.)

Mindfulness is about our human ability to be present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, without being overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. (Adapted from mindful.org.)

Seven pillars of mindfulness

1. Don't judge
2. Be patient and let things unfold in time
3. Be open-minded
4. Trust in your feelings and intuition
5. Don't force things – try less, be more
6. Accept the circumstances as they are
7. Let go

Mindfulness practices

Mindfulness is available to everyone at any time. You can practise it daily. Here are some tips to help you make mindfulness a part of your day. (Adapted from mindful.org.)

- Set aside the time and space for meditation
- Pay attention to the present moment and observe it as it is
- Recognize when your mind is wandering and gently bring it back to the present moment
- Let go of your judgments

Try these exercises this week

1. Centering exercises to ground yourself
2. Breathing exercises to reduce tension and stress
3. Daily mindfulness breaks to boost your mood

1. Centering exercises

Centering exercises are a disciplined approach to calming a scattered mind. In a few minutes, you can refocus your thoughts and intentions, connect with your environment, and pay attention to what matters in the present moment.

Caring for yourself and others at vulnerable times requires focus and presence. Centering exercises can help you calm down, be present, ground yourself, and better help others.

Centering exercises can be an excellent strategy for coping with stress and challenging situations. There are many techniques to help you ground yourself.



Two simple approaches you can try

5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique

This technique uses your five senses to bring you back to the present moment.



Step 1

Sit comfortably



Step 2

Close your eyes



Step 3

Take a couple of deep breaths—in through your nose (count to 3), out through your mouth (count to 3)



Step 4

Open your eyes and look around



Step 5

In a mindful and present way, name out loud:

- 5 things you can see (in the room and outside the window)
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste



Step 6

Take a deep breath to conclude the exercise



Release your excess adrenalin

If you can't concentrate because you are too excited or agitated, you can start your mindfulness practice with a little physical activity to release the overflow of energy. You will then be able to focus calmly with intention during the centering exercise.



Go for a run



Clean the house to channel your energy into something useful



Dance around the room as if nobody is watching



Take a brisk walk

2. Breathing exercises to reduce tension and stress

Breathing is often overlooked as a technique, yet it is one of the most accessible and effective ways to manage stress and tension. Deep breathing exercises can have a profound effect on your physical and emotional well-being and greatly enhance your meditation practice.

Studies indicate that breathing can improve cognitive function, encourage positive thought processes, reduce the symptoms of anxiety, and much more.

Audio meditations from Headspace

<https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>

- Relieving Stress (9:59 minutes)
- Walking at Home (10:00 minutes)
- Panicking (3:00 minutes)

3. Daily mindfulness practices

The daily practice of mindfulness offers ways to slow down and improve concentration throughout the day, decreasing your risk of becoming overwhelmed by any stresses and challenges.

The exercises keep you aware of what is drawing your attention and help you to deliberately redirect your focus as often as you like.

Daily mindfulness practices you can try (Adapted from mindful.org.)

- Mindful wake-up: Starting with purpose, set an intention for your day and check in periodically as the day unfolds
- Mindful eating: Enjoy every bite, eat in silence, and listen to your body
- Mindful pause: Take time to rewire the brain by doing things in a deliberate way and turning off autopilot
- Mindful workout: Set the intention for your workout, consciously go through the steps and actions, and notice how you are feeling
- Mindful driving: You are not the only one stuck in traffic; take advantage of the time to breathe, be mindful and practice patience