

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is being aware of the present moment. When you are mindful, you do not judge, reflect, or drift into thoughts of the past or concerns about the future. You simply observe what is happening around you.



A mindful person slows down to process thoughts and feelings more deeply. Instead of acting out of anger, jealousy, or fear, she waits until her mind is clear. She then chooses the right action from her options. She strives to be aware of how she affects other people.



Mindfulness is an activity that can be done anytime and anywhere. Just focus on what is happening in the present moment. You can be mindful of the sensations in your chest while breathing, of the sound of a car passing by, of the changing shape of the clouds, or the feeling of water while taking a shower. You can also be mindful of your thoughts: “I should take deeper breaths, I don’t like the sound of cars passing by, I think it is going to be cloudy today, I love bathing in hot water,” etc.

*What am I **thinking** right NOW?*

*What am I **feeling** right NOW?*

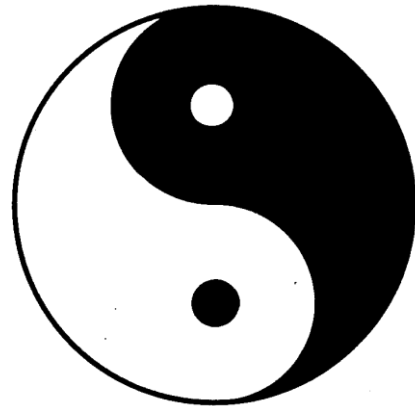
*What am I **seeing** right NOW?*

*What am I **hearing** right NOW?*

*What am I **tasting** right NOW?*

*What am I **smelling** right NOW?*

*What am I **touching** right NOW?*



Mindfulness can greatly reduce stress and improve your overall wellness, which is why we refer to it as a gift...“the present”. Many religions encourage some form of mindfulness (prayer, meditation, etc.). Several types of therapy use it, too. Mindfulness will make you appreciate life’s endless harmony and the simplicity of beauty and Love.

Practicing Mindfulness

Close your eyes for thirty seconds and pay attention only to the sounds around you. When you are finished, answer the following questions:

∂ What did you hear?

∂ Did you notice each of those sounds before closing your eyes, or only after paying attention to them?

Chances are, you noticed more than one sound, and you were probably unaware of the sounds until you paid them attention.

Now, close your eyes again for thirty seconds, and pay attention only to your breathing. When you are finished, answer the following question:

∂ Did you notice yourself breathing earlier today, or only after you paid it attention?

Again, chances are, you only realized you were breathing after paying attention.

The point is, there are many things going on both outside you and within you that you are unaware of. These include thoughts and emotions.

∂ Do you notice each thought you have? Or do thoughts just come and go?

For most people, thoughts just come and go. Just as we are unaware of each breath entering and exiting our bodies, we are unaware of each thought entering and exiting our minds. The same works for emotions.

When you practice mindfulness, you make an effort to notice your inner and outer worlds. By noticing your thoughts and emotions, you become more aware of how your thoughts affect your emotions. Many people do not realize that their patterns of thinking can control how they feel.

Imagine this scenario: You are alone in a dark alley way. It is 3 a.m. Two huge men approach you quickly. You cannot see their faces.

∂ How would you feel?

∂ Why would you feel this way?

Now, imagine you encounter the two huge men. You realize they are your best friends from college who you haven't seen for years.

∂ Now, how would you feel?

∂ Why would you feel this way?

In this scenario, you probably went from feeling scared to feeling excited. The two huge men were your best friends, but you did not notice them. At first, you THOUGHT: "They might be dangerous!", so you FELT scared. But then, you THOUGHT: "They are my best friends!", so you FELT excited.

∂ What changed: the two men, or your thoughts about the two men?

As this scenario proves, your thoughts often control your emotions. This is why it is so important to be mindful!

Meditation



What is happening right now?

We spend a lot of time being distracted by our thoughts and swept away by our emotions. Usually, we don't realize it.

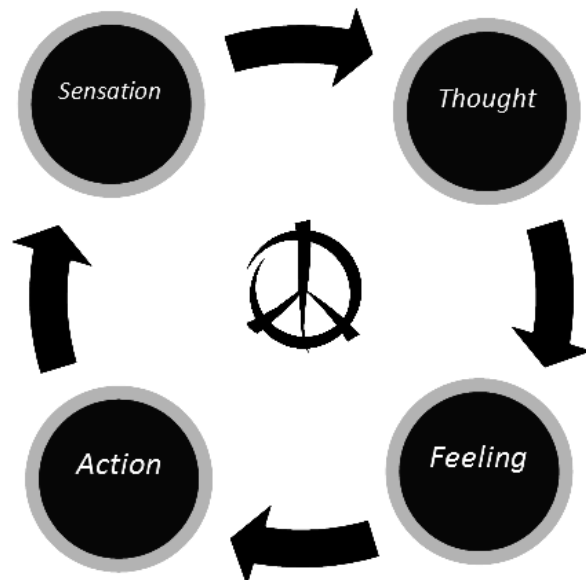
In meditation, you observe your thoughts and emotions without passing judgment. You *accept* them in yourself without punishment or praise. Instead of saying to yourself, "I hate that I am depressed. I'm just a negative person!" you kindly remark to yourself, "I am feeling depressed right now. It is only a feeling, and feelings pass..."



Meditation can greatly improve your overall wellness and happiness. However, meditation takes practice and patience. After years of being distracted, you must train your mind to calm down. Sitting quietly is the most common way to meditate, but it's not necessary. You can practice meditation in any situation.

Let's practice!

1. Find a quiet place. Sit in a chair or on the floor with your head, neck and back straight. Make sure you are comfortable. Clear your mind of thoughts about the past or future. Focus on what is happening in the present moment. You may close your eyes or keep them open. It is your choice 😊



2. Notice your breath. Let the air enter your nostrils and leave your mouth. Focus on the sensation of air moving in and out of your body as you breathe. Try to breathe from your belly. Feel it rise and fall.

3. Notice each thought as it comes and goes, whether it be a worry, fear, anxiety or hope. As thoughts arise in your mind, do not ignore or suppress them. Simply note them, remain calm and return to focusing on your breathing.

4. If you find yourself drifted away in your thoughts, notice where your mind went off to. Do not make judgments or be hard on yourself. Simply return to focusing on your breathing.

5. When you are ready to finish, make note of where you are and how you feel. Stand up gradually.

∂ Are you surprised how much more you notice when you meditate?

∂ Is the sound of traffic that is bothersome or you who is being bothered?